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Thursday 24 November 2011

Jeudi 24 novembre 2011

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 November 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 novembre 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please pray with me.

Prayers.

WITHDRAWAL OF BILL 3

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yesterday, Mr. Shurman introduced Bill 3, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving companies that provide public transit services to The Regional Municipality of York. I have had the opportunity to review the bill and have observed that it has been put forward with two co-sponsors, Mr. Klees and Ms. Munro.

Standing order 69 provides for the co-sponsorship of private members' public bills, but states that such bills may be co-sponsored by up to one member from each of the recognized parties and by an independent member. Because there is no provision for co-sponsors of a private member's public bill to be members of the same recognized party, I must therefore find the bill to be out of order and have directed that it be removed from the orders and notices paper.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2011, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very proud to stand today on behalf of New Democrats to respond to the throne speech of this minority Parliament.

I think it's pretty clear that New Democrats will not be defeating the government on this speech. We think that the people gave us an actual mandate to work together. That's the mandate that the people of this province gave all of us on October 6. Therefore, what we plan to do is to get down to work. We plan to get down to work.

I think it's interesting that the government made some particular comments in that throne speech. They used words like they were prepared to work together: They were going to be "working together." They were going to be listening. These are commitments that were made in that throne speech just the other day. In the coming

months, what New Democrats are going to do is hold them to those commitments of listening and working together. We're going to see if those commitments are actual commitments or just simply some nice words they decided to throw into the throne speech. I've got to say that I'm hoping it's the former, because the people of this province want change.

I think that if one thing is clear from the result of the election it's that the people want change. They don't want the same old status quo. They're tired of the same politics as usual, as has been served up in this place year after year after year. We just finished an election campaign where candidates actually refused to debate. Instead, they decided to hide behind their negative attack ads.

You know, if we have a Legislature where ministers refuse to listen, and hide behind their talking points, then the people who sent us here, the people who actually make this province work, are going to get lost in the shuffle. What we need to do is make sure all of us are listening and make sure all of us are working together, and that we're not hiding behind things like talking points and other structures to prevent us from responding to the people who put us here to get to work. What we need to do—every single one of us in this chamber, in this new minority Parliament—is put the focus back on the people of Ontario.

I really think there's only one way to do that, Speaker. The way you put the focus back on the people of Ontario is to actually make the Legislature work. I'm not saying that I think it's going to be easy, because I'm not naive. But I do believe that by focusing on real and achievable change, we can get real results for Ontarians.

You know, our caucus has already started. We want to make life more affordable. It's something I heard, not only all the way through the campaign in every corner of the province, but for months and months—in fact, years—before the campaign started. People are feeling the squeeze. Life is getting very, very tough. They don't know where to turn to get a bit of a break.

What we decided as New Democrats, as part of what we needed to do in our election campaign, was respond to exactly the kinds of concerns that the people of Ontario told us they had. One of the things we said we wanted to do, and one of the things we are putting forward as one of our first initiatives, is something to make life more affordable for everyday people, because that's one of the top issues on their minds. So Mike Mantha, our new MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin, will be calling for second reading, this very afternoon, a bill to take the HST off home heating costs.

This bill, to some, may seem a small step. But in fact it's an important step, because it says that we here in this Legislature understand that families are hurting, we understand that we need to make life more affordable for everyday families and we're prepared to protect them from an unfair tax that never should have been applied to daily essentials like home heating in the first place.

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This initiative that the member for Algoma-Manitowlin has brought forward is a simple idea, it's an achievable idea and it's something that will do exactly what the people asked us to do, which is to make their lives more affordable. More than anything else, it does what we need to be doing every single day in this Legislature, because it puts people first.

Why does it do that? Because people need help. People have seen very, very hard times in recent years. And I'm not the only one that knows that; I know that every single person in this chamber today knows that. People need help. They've had a very, very tough time. Between September 2008 and May 2009—most of you probably know this—over 250,000 Ontarians lost their jobs—250,000. And that's a trend that has not stopped: We saw just in October another 75,000 full-time jobs lost in Ontario.

But during that time-frame when the recession hit, real GDP plummeted by three percentage points. The unemployment rate in centres like Windsor and Oshawa grew into the double digits, and Toronto wasn't all that far behind.

The recovery that we've seen since those times has been uneven; it's been unreliable and uncertain. Although many people are still forecasting some economic growth in the next year, these days nobody's betting their house on it. People are very concerned. Economists are very concerned.

It's been a rough ride for everybody for quite some time, but middle-income earners, middle-income households that were already feeling the squeeze are now saying that they're actually falling behind. Recent surveys have found that half of Canadians have experienced a deterioration in their financial situation over the last year; 60% of families are living paycheque to paycheque. Ontario's consumer confidence index remains the lowest—rock bottom—of all the provinces in this country. Ontarians have the highest job anxiety of anyone else in Canada. One out of every four people are saying that they or someone in their household is worried about losing their job.

Now, I would put it to every member in this chamber and to you, Speaker, that we cannot succeed as a province—this province will not succeed—if every day people continue to feel like they're falling behind.

Interruption.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a rookie mistake. It'll probably never happen again, right?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's for sure. He just lost it.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, we learn by our mistakes, that's definitely sure. Maybe the government will have learned by its mistakes of the past eight years.

Anyway, people who are worried about making ends meet are not going to do the kinds of things that help our economy. People who are worried about making ends meet are not going to go out and buy a new home. They're not going to make those big kinds of capital purchases if they're really concerned about what the very near future brings. People who think things are not going to get better don't see in their horizon the opportunity for a new and better job are not going to spend the time upgrading their skills, because there's nothing there for them at the end of that process.

There's a growing concern from economists that the household debt and the economic insecurity that we're facing is becoming a drag on our economy. If our economy is actually going to work, families need to be looking towards the future with some confidence, with some assurance that things are going to get better.

How do we confront this kind of challenge? How do we confront this kind of scenario? I think we need to be innovative in our thinking. I think we have to stop putting blind faith in ideology and some of the tired ideas of the past. We need to recognize absolutely that the private sector will create jobs, but also that government has a very key role to play, and we need to put the people of this province and their economic well-being at the heart of all of our plans. If the people of Ontario are financially secure, then the economy of Ontario and of the entire country will be secure as well.

I think New Democrats realize better than most that if we're going to confront those challenges that we face, the challenges ahead, we can't do so under a massive debt burden. When we put our platform together, we were very careful about ensuring that we were tackling that debt burden, as the other two parties did in their platforms as well.

Some of you may be surprised to hear this, but economists have actually studied the federal Department of Finance's fiscal tables, and they have found that New Democratic governments have run fewer deficit budgets than any other political party in government. This is a fact that has often gone unnoticed, but it is the absolute truth. And not only have New Democrats run fewer deficit budgets, but, moreover, they have run smaller deficits as a share of GDP when they have had to run deficit budgets. New Democrats have achieved this success by taking a balanced approach.

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One of the members across the way is referring to the federal Liberal leader when he used to be the head of a government here in Ontario as an example. I have to say that one bad apple won't ruin the bushel when it comes to our record. In fact, that record is part of an overall scenario that shows very clearly that New Democrats have done a much better job than Liberals, a much better job than Conservatives, a much better job than even the Socreds when you put them into the mix. The bottom line is that New Democrats have run, historically, across Canada, fewer deficit budgets, and when we have run them, they have been lower in

terms of the ratio of deficit to GDP. If you don't like the facts, go talk to the finance folks at the federal government. They're the ones who put the facts together. The facts speak for themselves.

But I want to get back to the point: that the way this is achieved with New Democratic governments is with a balanced approach. When I say "a balanced approach," what do I mean by that? I mean that you have to look carefully at the province's revenues and expenditures. The deficit that we're currently running was absolutely essential. We supported a lot of the measures that led to that deficit. It was essential to create jobs and ensure that our economy was able to stay on track. But now we need a long-term, responsible plan to get back into balance, one that doesn't put an already shaky economic recovery at greater risk. We have to be very careful. It's a very, very delicate process. We also don't want to have the kinds of solutions that put more pressure on households who are already feeling the squeeze, households who are already quite worried about the future.

Now, the Premier has said that he actually agrees with some of these principles. He says he's not going to proceed with across-the-board cuts. He says he's not going to increase the privatization of our health care system. I was happy to hear those remarks from the Premier. I was quite happy to hear that. But I have to say, having been here for a couple of years now, I'm also quite skeptical. Ontario families have heard these kinds of promises before, and these kinds of promises, unfortunately, have often been followed by dramatic across-the-board cuts. So, notwithstanding what is being said, we turn around and the exact opposite happens.

Ontario can get its books back into balance, Speaker, but not without balance.

In the last campaign, I committed to an expenditure management review, and if I was the Premier, I would be making sure that that was going to happen. We have to look critically at government spending and find those savings. But I don't think that's enough. I believe that we need to have an honest look at everything if we're going to balance the books of the province; if we're going to do that, most importantly, without breaking the backs of the people who make the province work.

0920

I think we need to get past some of the same old ideas that get recycled around this place. Since the recession, whether it's Stephen Harper in Ottawa or Dalton McGuinty right here in Ontario, the solution seems to be the same: another round of corporate tax giveaways. That's the solution that this government has brought. That's the solution that the federal government under Mr. Harper has brought. In order to pay for those corporate tax cuts, they cut services to people. That's the solution of the Liberals; that's the solution of the Conservatives federally.

In the next two years the government here in Ontario plans to spend \$600 million in corporate tax cuts—\$600 million in corporate tax cuts—and, a few years later, over a billion dollars a year on a scheme that this government put together with Stephen Harper to let Ontario's biggest

corporations write off taxes on expenses like entertainment.

Now, that's not only a misplaced priority, in my humble opinion. The government is at the same time spending as much as a billion dollars to cancel private power deals—private power deals that they themselves put in place. How does that make any sense? Salaries for public sector CEOs have been climbing by as much as six figures a year in the province of Ontario. Meanwhile, we're being told that there's a crisis in Ontario's budget and people are going to have to tighten their belts. Obviously, only some people are going to have to tighten their belts. Other people are going to have an easy ride here.

I just don't get it. There's this definition that is talked about by everyone from Dr. Einstein to Dr. Phil, and it goes like this: The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again and actually expecting to get a different result. I would say corporate tax cuts, in the way this government and the federal government are implementing them year over year over year and which we get nothing for, are definitely an example of insanity.

You know, these same old tired solutions that we have been trying for over a decade—for a couple of decades now—are going to produce the exact same results. Look where they've gotten us. Look where this direction has gotten us. It's gotten us nowhere. We now have one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the world and we have record household debt, we have record highs of unemployment and we have people who are falling behind in every corner of this province.

Lowering the corporate tax rate another point or giving Ontario's biggest corporations a tax write-off when they entertain at the SkyDome will not create jobs, and it won't help the families that are facing tough times here in Ontario. But on the other hand, closing another emergency room, closing another child care centre or hiking transit fares is just adding another burden to families that are already feeling the squeeze.

You know, I believe we actually need to understand the challenges that we're facing and be more innovative about how we deal with them. We all know that productivity growth is lagging in the province of Ontario. The Premier actually recently expressed a little bit of confusion about Ontario's dismal progress in that regard. I don't really think it's all that much of a mystery: We need far better, more targeted financial incentives for business capital investment. Across-the-board cuts are not cutting it. We've now had two successive governments that have invested in across-the-board corporate tax cuts: the Liberals in the last two terms and the Conservatives before them.

Now, as I made very clear during the campaign, I don't think we need more of that. If Ontario's business is going to succeed, Ontario's government needs to focus their resources where they can do the most good. If the government is going to be investing \$2 billion a year, I want to make sure every penny of that \$2 billion is used as effectively as possible. And I don't think further cor-

porate tax cuts are giving us effective productivity bang for our buck. We are not seeing that reinvestment. We are not seeing it at all. In fact, what we're seeing is the opposite. We're seeing those tax cuts going into cash reserves. That's what's growing: cash reserves for corporations. Not investments in capital, equipment, machinery—that's not happening.

I do think, however, that there are some other ways of working with business to create the kind of response, the kind of results, that we want to see. I think we can actually do different things to stimulate investment and to create jobs.

During the campaign I put a couple of proposals forward: an investment tax credit to specifically help those companies that were ready to increase productivity and create jobs in Ontario. Investment tax credits are much more promising as a way to stimulate critical new investments, because they provide increased cash flow that is directly targeted to investment.

We also talked about a training tax credit in the campaign that actually rewards the employers who are hiring people and who are investing in training. If we want to create prosperity, if we want to ensure that we have a strong economic future, we need to have the people who have the skills to perform the value-added jobs of the future. And giving some recognition to those employers who actually do that training on the job as opposed to giving across-the-board tax cuts, which actually rewards everybody including those employers who simply poach trained workers off of other employers that actually do the training—we think a targeted approach that rewards those companies that are doing the training is a far, far better way to go. So a tax credit that rewards training.

The other one that we talked about in the campaign, of course, was a tax credit that actually rewards job creation, because, let's face it, we have a crisis in jobs in terms of what's happening here in the province. We need to create more jobs; across-the-board tax cuts don't do that. If you give a company an across-the-board tax cut, they can do anything they want with that tax cut. They could create a job. They don't have to create a job. They could send all their jobs down south like Navistar did. Right, member for Essex? Very close to his home town.

So a tax credit that rewards job creation is an idea that actually incents the companies to create more jobs. It creates more employment. Similar measures are currently being debated in the United States, and the Economic Policy Institute in the US has estimated that a tax break for new hires would lead companies to add 2.8 million more workers this year than they would have without that kind of break. Now, granted it's a bigger economy, more people, but 2.8 million new jobs is not insubstantial. That's a policy that actually works. It's the sort of measure that we need here in Ontario if we are going to create jobs and help households.

There was one other thing that we talked about during the campaign that we thought was an important way to help create jobs and get the economy moving a little bit, and that was a reduction in the small business tax rate.

It's interesting, some of you may not be aware of this, but New Democrat governments in Manitoba have actually entirely eliminated taxes on small business because they recognize that small business helps drive the economy.

Now, this proposal that we brought forward at the very, very beginning of the campaign was so popular that Dalton McGuinty was making the same commitment himself within a couple of weeks. So the government's free to steal our ideas. We think it's great if they steal our ideas. We hope they steal more of our ideas. Actually, we want them to steal all of our ideas, because I think we have the right ideas. We have different ideas than they do. We've seen how their ideas work—they don't. We want to see them steal more of our ideas. We look forward to putting forward all kinds of ideas and we look forward to putting forward legislation.

0930

The measures that I'm laying out are ones that would provide much-needed stimulus where it is needed, and that's the point. But they would also be much more cost-effective for a government that needs to be watching every single penny. I say that because the dollars that we are counting in the context of our fiscal plans for the future are ones that are going to be very precious, and we're going to need to make sure that we're using those dollars very carefully as we focus—or as we should be focusing—on the priorities of Ontario families.

The quality of our health care system is always at the top of the list, and I certainly heard from a lot of people all through the campaign about their concern about the lack of the kind of health care that people need being available for them when they need it. That's shameful when everyone knows it's the top priority and this government has allowed that top priority to erode in terms of people's confidence of their health care system.

Fifty years ago, Tommy Douglas and the pioneers of medicare dreamed of a medical system where people didn't just receive treatment when they fell ill, but they received support so that they didn't fall ill in the first place. Douglas saw this as the very best way to make publicly provided health care services truly sustainable. And I agree. We have to get into that other way of doing things, that other focus. Our current health care model ships people into expensive hospital care even when everyone agrees that that's not necessarily where they should be.

I'm going to cite a particular example. There are currently 4,558 patients in Ontario hospitals. Most of those patients are seniors, taking up 16% of hospital beds, even though they no longer require hospital care. Providing care for these patients costs our health care system \$450 a day in hospital, compared to as little as \$50 a day with home care services or about \$130 to \$150 a day in a nursing home.

When you speak to seniors, they say very clearly—and their friends and family members say very clearly—that they are not happy when they're forced to live in hospitals. They'll tell you they would much prefer living at home with supports or in a decent long-term-care facility. That's where they would prefer to be.

I've had the opportunity to speak with seniors myself. I've talked to them as they wait and their family members wait for them to get a bed in long-term care. I have to say, it is a heartbreaking and frustrating experience.

It makes no policy sense whatsoever that this continues to happen. There's been a crisis in alternative-level-of-care beds for years and years on end. We see emergency wards lined up—in London particularly but in so many other communities—ambulance after ambulance after ambulance that can't get their patients offloaded into the hospital because the hospital beds are all full because there isn't enough long-term care and there isn't enough home care to get the patients out and getting the care that they need in a much more humane way. So you're getting a problem in the emergency wards. It's happening everywhere. It's been happening for years and years and years under this government's watch, and it's still happening to this day.

It is unacceptable that we still have this crisis, that we still have this problem, and there has been virtually nothing done about it, notwithstanding the promises that have been made. As a matter of fact, in a number of communities, hundreds of beds have been promised, years and years have gone by, and those beds have not materialized. I think of the fiasco at Grace hospital in Windsor as a prime example. Unfortunately, it's only one example of many where beds were promised and never materialized. The state of the hospital system in that community is in crisis, just like it is in London and so many other places in this province.

It makes no policy sense whatsoever. That's why in the last campaign we made a real commitment to expanding home care services and investing in long-term-care beds. It was also part of our rationale for our proposals for expanding family health care clinics and birthing centres for new mothers. As Tommy Douglas envisioned back in those days when he set out the path towards a sustainable medicare system, one of the things that was really clear is that we have to give people the supports they need before they get sick, and things like family health care centres and birthing centres for moms are the kinds of things that lead us toward that vision. By providing modest supports for people that help them stay healthy, we can contain costs and enhance our health care system.

But to do that we have to think and plan very, very carefully—very, very carefully. You know, when I think about the delays and disasters that occurred in the implementation of much-needed systems of electronic health records in this province, I shake my head. It is an example of what not to do. It wasn't well thought out, it wasn't well planned and it cost a billion dollars or more in money that we couldn't recoup. It's shameful that that took place.

We now have a system of local health integration networks that I also think are problematic. We need to have some reform in those systems. We said in our campaign that we have to scrap those LHINs and replace them with truly accountable, truly transparent and truly

responsive models. It's unfortunate that once again, in its rush to get something out the door, the government sent it out half-baked and did a terrible job of implementing that model. Now we have so many communities that are angry with the LHINs and that are distrustful of the decisions that are being made there.

It's really sad, because it wasn't well thought out and it wasn't well planned. As a result, the LHINs have been a disaster in many, many communities. There may be one exception—maybe two—but in most communities they have been an utter failure, not for any reason except that the government shoved it out the door and didn't plan well and didn't think well. Now we have a great disappointment when it comes to the way the local health integration networks were put together.

I think that there's also another important principle—whether it's in health care or in other areas—that we need to commit to: That is the fact that public ownership and public accountability are the best ways to contain costs. If you're just spending all kinds of extra money on making sure that, particularly in health care, those private operators are lining their pockets, then I think you're not doing a good service to the people of Ontario. I think we need to be very, very careful about how we move forward, whether it's in long-term care or home care.

We've watched this government and the one before it allow our home care system to become virtually completely privatized. That was a proactive decision that was taken by both these governments. I have a real concern that that was a big mistake, and now we're suffering the results of that.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, later today the member for Algoma-Manitoulin is going to be bringing forward for second reading his private member's bill on the HST—particularly on getting the HST off home heating. You know, the government is proposing other measures in this regard. They're talking about other things they want to do to make life more affordable. We're going to look at those measures. We're going to look at those measures that the government is going to bring forward. We're going to talk about them. We're going to perhaps suggest changes and amendments to them. But this afternoon there is an opportunity for every single member in this Legislature to think carefully about what is on top of everyone's mind right now.

On top of everyone's mind, as the temperatures plummet and the furnaces go up, is how are they going to get through the winter months and still make ends meet with the cost of energy going up and the HST adding insult to injury on those home heating bills? I would invite the members of all parties to seriously consider, in private members' business, supporting the bill being brought forward by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

I say that because we have to look at what the priorities of this minority Parliament need to be. I don't think that another useless corporate tax giveaway that doesn't do a darned thing in terms of job creation—it simply allows these corporations to shovel more money into their cash reserves—is the right way to go right now.

Maybe those guys need to take a bit of the pain. Maybe those guys need to actually just stay where they are. I'm not even saying put it back up to 14 at this point. Hit a pause button on those plans to give more and more and more breaks to corporations while families suffer and are unable to pay their bills. It's just a matter of priority.

0940

I think the priority right now for the people of Ontario needs to be putting them at the top of the list for a change, putting their affordability—their ability to pay their bills, their ability to make ends meet day in and day out—at the top of the list.

I would urge MPPs to seriously consider what the people in their ridings are thinking about, what the people in their ridings are concerned about, and how, in this first week here in the Legislature, we can actually show them that we were listening to what they had to say during the election campaign, we were paying attention to the concerns they brought to the table. Because they didn't just bring them to my table; I'm sure they brought them to all of your tables as well. I'm hopeful that private members' business will be the opportunity for all of the members in this minority Parliament to actually work together and make a change for the people of Ontario.

I'm going to wrap up my remarks, notwithstanding some of the interesting comments that are coming from the other side.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The blah, blah, blah.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes, exactly, the blah, blah, blah—to try to just refocus where I went in terms of my remarks.

We set out the fact that we are not going to make the government fall on the matter of the throne speech. We think there were a couple of words that we could pick out, words that were referencing things like working together, referencing things like listening, which would be wonderful changes in here. In fact, a little bit of the—the member for Trinity–Spadina calls it the “blah, blah, blah.” You don't listen when you're blah, blah, blahing, I think is part of the point. But we're certainly hoping that those words actually had some meaning to them and they weren't simply put in to the throne speech as a bit of sugar coating and nice words for us to hang on to.

So we do intend to hold the government to their commitment, as they stated it in the throne speech, to work together, to listen to what other parties have to bring to the table, because I think in the response that the people gave us on October 6, they have to know very clearly that they weren't given all of the power in this place; they were given some marching orders that said it's time for you to get off your high horse and start dealing with other parties and not have the arrogance of a majority government anymore but have the humility of a minority government. I'd like to see some of that coming from the other side of this chamber, to be honest with you, Speaker.

I say that not because it's something that only I want to see. I heard it on the doorsteps; I heard it in every community during the leader's tour of this campaign.

People are tired of the arrogance and, frankly, they're tired of the partisanship and they're tired of the politics as usual, because when that happens, they don't see themselves being reflected in here. They see the fights, they see the brinkmanship, they see the anger, they see the noise, they see all kinds of shenanigans, but what they also see is that, in all of that mess, the regular folks of Ontario have been forgotten. They've been set aside for some other game that's being played that doesn't have their interests at the heart.

I think that's why they voted for change. That's why they voted for something different this time around. They said no to brinkmanship; they said no to nastiness; they said no to empty rhetoric, no to scoring political points and insulting each other just for the sake of doing it.

The people of this province are facing very serious challenges, very real challenges. I truly believe, as I said earlier, that if the people are doing better, then we're all going to do better. If the people of this province are feeling secure and strong about the future, then this province has a strong and secure future. The crisis in household debt and household finances is definitely hurting our economy. We need to shore folks up.

Now, we are in the process of dealing with balancing our budget over the next couple of years, and I think we have to make sure that we keep priorities in order, that it can't just be about giving the big corporations a break and forgetting about the everyday families. That well-worn path is one that isn't working. We need to change the focus.

We've heard those talks before, as I mentioned, those comments about painless cuts and balancing budgets with cuts that are not going to hurt. We've heard it from everyone from Mike Harris to Paul Martin, quite frankly. Every time we hear those words, we turn around and see the exact opposite. We see very, very painful cuts. We see families suffering as a result of those cuts. So I think that we need to rebalance our priorities. As I said in the speech, we need to make sure that we balance the budget, we balance the books, but that we do that in a very balanced way.

I don't think across-the-board corporate tax cuts in this context is balanced. I don't think allowing CEO salaries at the highest levels in our public systems to continue to grow by six figures every single year is a balanced approach; I don't think that's a balanced way to do things. I don't think willy-nilly cancelling of power plants and not telling the public exactly how much it's going to cost us is a balanced way of doing things. I think what we need to do is focus on the affordability of everyday life for families. We need to make sure that we're putting them front and centre in our exercise of balancing the budget. I think we start today, this afternoon, by getting the HST off of home heating.

As I said, Speaker, we need to look seriously, and we are committed. New Democrats are committed to working hard here. We're rolling up our sleeves, and we're going to look seriously at all of the proposals that the government brings forward. We're hoping that we are

going to get the same respect from them: that they will look seriously at all of the things we bring forward regardless of in which context that is. There are many opportunities in this place, as we all know, to have those kinds of conversations, and we look forward to it. We're going to do our job. We expect and I think the people of Ontario expect that all 107 of us are going to do our jobs here.

What we want to see very clearly is some broad-based measures to make life more affordable for everyday Ontarians. We also want to see a focus on health care. We want to see a focus that says it's not the most important thing to make sure that the CEO gets his raise at the hospital every year. The only person that should be waiting in a hospital is the CEO waiting for his raise, not the hundreds of people waiting in the emergency room for decent care.

Finally, Speaker, we want to make sure that we're focusing on jobs. We want to make sure that as we deal with the fiscal pressures that this province is facing and the job that Ontarians have given us over the next little while, we want to focus on jobs. We don't want to have massive corporate tax cuts that aren't working. We want to have focused plans; focused, targeted ways of getting people back to work; focused, targeted ways of getting people trained; focused, targeted ways of encouraging investment. That's why we believe the things that have been successful in other jurisdictions will be successful here in Ontario as well, and that is a tax credit system for those very goals: job creation, investment and training. New Democrats want to see some of that happening in the next little while as well.

I'm going to end by saying that there are other things that we brought to the table in the campaign. We think we can create more jobs through a buy-Ontario policy. We should be using our own tax dollars, the money that we ask people to pay to help run our province, to actually put those same people back to work. We think a buy-Ontario policy is a smart job-creation policy and would ask that the government consider it in the next little while. We think it's really important to see that our natural resources, which we're pulling out of the ground all across the north, are actually being processed in Ontario, putting northerners back to work.

These are real initiatives, Speaker, that need to be tried because the same old way, the same old path, the same old plans, processes and ideas that have been recycled on that side of the bench—many of which they got from the Conservative side of the bench—aren't working and haven't worked for Ontarians. Ontarians told us that loudly and clearly during the campaign: Things are not working for them. What we need to do is work together—find ways of working together—to make it work for them for a change and to put people at the front of the priority list.

With that, I end my remarks, and I thank the members for paying such rapt attention, including the member for St. Catharines.

I now move the adjournment of the debate. Not yet? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Any further business?

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That being the case, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0951 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce the family of page Sebastian Gayowsky and welcome his mom, Susan Karney, and Anna Gayowsky and Christopher Gayowsky, his siblings. Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, Alli Meyer is page captain, and I would like to welcome her parents, Deb and Tim, and her brother, Craig Meyer. They all just happen to be from my hometown of Teeswater. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

The member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to congratulate you on your election, first.

I'm very happy to welcome the family of one of our new pages, Ms. Madeline Braney from Pickering–Scarborough East. Her dad, Chris Braney, is a school trustee in the Durham board of education, and his wife, Sylvia Braney, is here as well. Welcome to you all.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce Ms. Gular Yusibzade from the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

It is now time for—oh, excuse me.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I'm new, so I want to make sure I'm doing this properly. As a point of order: It's the second day of questioning and the Premier isn't here. Is he allowed not to be here?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will wait. The standing orders do request that when the Speaker is standing, everyone is quiet.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And that will get you a warning.

The member is out of order. It is not proper to bring attention to the absence of anyone in this House.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask, please, that we have the assembly of our new pages.

My friends, we will be greeting our pages in the traditional way. I really believe it's an important aspect of what we do here, and I know we will show our appreciation. I offer that if anyone in particular from a certain riding wishes to amplify their greeting, please feel free to do so.

We have, from Don Valley East, Yousef Abdel Rahman; from Halton, Laibah Ashfaq; from Parkdale–High Park, Carolyn Bayley; from Pickering–Scarborough East, Madeline Braney; from Mississauga–Erindale, Michela Brooks; from St. Paul's, Andrew Clifford; from Toronto–Danforth, Tara Collins; from Windsor West, Christian D'Agnillo; from Ottawa–Vanier, Danica Davies; from Don Valley West, Sebastian Gayowsky; from London–Fanshawe, Theodore Giesen; from Scarborough–Rouge River, Ashley Jones; from Ottawa South, Prakriti Kharel; from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Lila Kloppenburg; from Perth–Wellington, Samuel Knechtel; from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Aidan Lehecka; from Wellington–Halton Hills, Emily Rose Longo Belbin; from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Bernadette McCann; from Huron–Bruce, Alli Meyer; from Scarborough Southwest, Mobarat Shahriar; from London West, Owen Thompson; and, from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, Daniel Vander Hout.

These are our pages.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question, I guess, is directed to the Acting Premier today. Yesterday, the finance minister's economic statement saw about a \$2-billion increase in the provincial deficit. The deficit actually went up, despite more revenue coming into the treasury. In fact, 26 out of the 28 ministers saw an increase in their spending—26 out of 28. At a time when we have a spending crisis in Ontario, 26 out of 28 saw increases from the previous year. So I ask the Acting Premier: Will you speak to the finance minister and instruct him to bring in a mandatory wage freeze for public sector workers in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, let's get the facts straight. In 2010, we laid out a deficit elimination

projection. In fact, this year we are ahead of schedule, where we said we would be. The member is right; compared to last year's budget, the deficit has gone up, because last year we overachieved on the target we set due to a number of one-time events.

1040

Mr. Speaker, we are going to stay on target. We are going to achieve our balanced budget according to the timelines we outlined, unlike the federal Conservative government, which has now stretched their timeline to balance. And we will continue to work with all.

Last year, as has been pointed out by Mr. Drummond and others, we have actually cut the rate of growth in spending in half. We think this is the right, balanced, reasonable approach and the fair approach. We're going to continue down that path.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Hudak: Well, Speaker, if the finance minister pats himself on the back for actually increasing the deficit, despite revenue going up, and calls himself an overachiever, it certainly doesn't speak well for getting out of the mess that we have here in the province of Ontario.

Let me ask the overachieving finance minister if he will think this through. He said that he opposes a mandatory wage freeze, as I saw him on the media yesterday responding to the PC call for a mandatory wage freeze. But, Minister, you do have a mandatory wage freeze when it comes to non-union workers in the province of Ontario, but it's steady as she goes with increases for union workers. Let me ask the finance minister: Why the dual system? Why the haves and have-nots? Why do you have a wage freeze for non-union, but you allow union wages to continue to increase?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition is again selectively using quotes. Let me say this: What we did say yesterday is that in fact the average rate of settlement in the Ontario public and broader public sectors is now lower than the private sector, it's lower than the federal, and it's lower than our municipal colleagues. There are challenges to a wage freeze that are legal and constitutional in nature; it doesn't preclude a wage freeze, but as we move forward in a reasonable and sensible approach to this, we have to be careful that it gets done properly.

The final point I made is that this government, unlike previous governments, does not want to scapegoat public servants. We don't want to scapegoat teachers, doctors and others. We need their help as we move forward. At the end of the day, we may not agree on everything, but this is about all of us working together for a brighter future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: But Minister, that's precisely my point: You're not working together; you're dividing public sector workers. You're saying to some that aren't in unions, "Your wages are frozen, but if you happen to join a union, you'll get wage increases just like you did in the past." I don't understand why you have this double

standard when it comes to a wage freeze in the province of Ontario. Our position is clear: Treat everyone equally, whether they're union or non-union. Bring in a mandatory public sector wage freeze and save the taxpayers \$2 million. Will you do the right thing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we have to respond to the realities—legal, constitutional—that confront any government. The member yesterday cited other levels of government that have lost court fights in this very same situation.

Again, we want to make sure that we avoid the kind of scapegoating that occurred under a previous government. We will ultimately likely disagree with some of the unions and their positions on things, but this is not about blaming. Our non-unionized personnel have done a great job over the last two years. We are grateful that they have accepted that and taken it as leaders in their organizations. We also achieved zero and zero with a number of bargaining units. I think the responsible, reasonable and fair approach, the steady leadership approach, is to do this carefully, working with our partners, both in the union and non-union sectors of the public and broader public sectors.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Finance and his previous answers: The Minister of Finance referenced the Constitution and he says that the reason he has a double standard when it comes to wage freezes—non-union are frozen but unions continue to get increases—is because of the Constitution. The minister very well knows that there is a mandatory wage freeze in British Columbia, in Alberta and in New Brunswick, and as well, Quebec has used a mandatory wage freeze.

Could the minister put on the table today the constitution of the province of Ontario? Surely the same Constitution applies to the other provinces. In your argument, why does the Constitution apply one way to BC, Alberta, New Brunswick and Quebec but differently to the province of Ontario? Can you answer that for me?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member needs to reference the BC Supreme Court decision and a number of others that have constrained governments.

The final point I would make on that: Mr. Drummond, an adviser we brought on, and others have advised and will advise the Leader of the Opposition and others that wage freezes tend not to work, either in the short or long term. What tends to happen is—say it's a two-year freeze: It tends to hold things down for two years, and then after it comes off, there's a big bump-up for catch-up.

That being said, wages and benefits represent 55 cents of every dollar the provincial government spends in the public and broader public sectors. There's no question that that will be part of the discussion we will have with all sectors of the economy as we move back to a balanced budget and create the conditions that will allow us to sustain the best education and health care systems in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Okay, so the finance minister now is backing away from his constitutional argument, realizing that's a false argument because there are wage freezes in British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick, and Quebec has done it, too. Now he tries argument number 2, in which he says there's going to be catch-up and that the wages will have to increase afterwards.

Well, then, I'll ask the finance minister: Why did you impose a wage freeze on non-union workers? How much is the catch-up going to be? If you say wage freezes don't work, that there's catch-up, that Don Drummond is against them, then why the heck did you apply a wage freeze on non-union workers? Are you for it? Are you against it? Explain yourself.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, we applied a zero and zero across the non-bargained sector, which represented one measure among a variety of measures that have helped us bring the deficit down from \$24.7 billion to \$16 billion this year.

The Leader of the Opposition cannot underestimate the importance of making sure that whatever steps we take—whether it's on wages or other—respect court decisions, respect processes that are outlined and, most importantly, respect the people who are on the other side of the table, whether it's non-bargained employees or bargained employees.

It might be doctors. I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition wants a freeze put on doctors. That's the next contract that is up for negotiation, and we'll look forward to his position on that. There are big collective agreements with teachers that are coming up as well, and I'm sure he'll apply that same sort of standard to doctors and teachers as he would to others.

These are challenging times. We're going to work with our partners, both union and non-union, professional and non-professional, to build the best—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's just hard to follow the finance minister's arguments. He's in favour of a wage freeze, except when he's not. And we have to watch out for the Constitution, except it somehow doesn't apply to the other provinces.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: He's dancing all over.

Mr. Tim Hudak: He is dancing all over, as my deputy leader says.

Let's just get to the bottom line here. The reason why you're not bringing in a mandatory wage freeze on the union side is because of your friends in the Working Families Coalition. I know your friends in the Working Families Coalition pull a lot of strings on decision-making over there.

We just think it is fair to treat everybody the same, whether you're a non-union worker or a union worker. It's fair to public sector workers, it's fair to taxpayers, and it will save us \$2 billion. So who are you going to listen to: taxpayers—an argument of fairness—or your friends in the Working Families Coalition?

You have no arguments left, Minister. If you support a wage freeze, make it the same for everybody and save \$2 billion for the taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let's put this in perspective. For budget purposes, we have already not increased funding for collective agreements over zero and zero. I can assure you, based on statements by leaders in the various public sector unions in the last 24 to 48 hours, they're not entirely happy at all with any of this.

It's not about that. It's very much about a better future for Ontario. It's very much about understanding that we have a long and protracted period of restraint and reform that is going to require the help and co-operation of the public and broader public sectors, both in the bargained and the non-bargained sectors.

We choose to take the reasonable approach. We choose to work with people, Mr. Speaker. We reject the politics of division of that party.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We reject the Leader of the Opposition's record when it came to firing civil servants and hiring them back as consultants at more money. We reject that. We're going to work with everyone in this province to get through these challenging global circumstances and build a better future for all Ontarians.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Deputy Premier indicated that the government found unallocated revenue. I just want the Deputy Premier to explain which programs they over-budgeted and when he found out about those over-budgeted programs.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In terms of the offsets associated with the new healthy home renovation tax credit—and I'm delighted the Premier is out today explaining that to senior citizens across Ontario—we found the first-year costs were \$60 million, I say to the leader of the third party. We're taking \$10 million from MEDI's fund for new job growth.

The second piece is on the seniors' home property tax credit. The amount we budgeted for was higher than the demand has been for it, so there's another \$50 million there for the first year. It rises in the second year, and in the third year we take unallocated capital that hasn't been to bring it to the full \$136 million.

We think that's reasonable; we think it's responsible. We've identified specific reductions elsewhere to fund something we think the vast majority of Ontarians support and are in favour of doing.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There seems to be a little bit of a pattern of the government finding unallocated funds when it suits their purpose and it suits their agenda, and then arguing that the cupboard's completely bare when it doesn't suit their agenda.

When exactly did the minister know that there was all this money in the cupboard?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If you look at estimates that this Legislature has approved and that will be re-tabled today because of the election, you will see that we lay out projections on a line-by-line basis, for tax expenditures as well as other expenditures, Mr. Speaker. These numbers do vary. That's why we have quarterly updates and, most importantly, the fall statement. So in fact for this year it became evident at the publication of the fall statement and the leadup to that period. These numbers, again, are savings projections. We have to move forward into the future. We think that's reasonable and responsible.

I should also say to the member opposite, we've left ministers flexibility and will, through the treasury board process, allow ministers between now and the actual budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —if those ministers find other offsets that make more sense or if in fact those numbers change between now and the publication of public accounts, we can offset elsewhere. It's reasonable accounting. It's standards that are generally accepted. They're audited by the Auditor General—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, before the House resumed I actually sent a letter to all the leaders asking them to support my initiative to have the Auditor General review the province's finances so that all parties could get an understanding of exactly what the fiscal challenges were. Unfortunately, that was something that the Deputy Premier opposed at the time. I want to know if he still opposes that kind of initiative?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Auditor General does audit everything. In fact, we submitted our budget to him in advance of the election. The Auditor General indicated that he felt that our revenue projections were accurate. It turns out we've had a great downturn in revenues. He felt that our expenditure estimates were aggressive, and I acknowledged at the time that he was right about that.

Again, Auditors General play an important function. We created a number of these roles under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. The Auditor General will be tabling his report at the beginning of December. I know all members look forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work with our auditors, the Auditor General, members of this House, our public accounts committee, estimates—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —and we'll look forward to working with all parties in the House, where there are offsets, to be able to try to do some of the things that I suspect we're all going to be able to agree—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In fact, that is why we wanted the auditor to give us an update before the House re-

sumed, because of the dancing-number games that the government tends to play. We just wanted to all have equal footing as we came into this minority Parliament.

Nonetheless, my next question is again to the Deputy Premier. Later today, we're going to be debating a move to give everyday people a much-needed break on their cost of home heating, a move that this Deputy Premier says we simply can't afford. Why should families believe him when this government consistently finds the money for their own priorities, yet cannot find the money to help everyday families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, we campaigned against doing that. We set up our tax plan for jobs and growth. We believe that was the right approach.

I remind the member opposite that we created the most generous sales tax credit in the country to help Ontarians of more modest means. Her proposal will actually benefit those who are with bigger homes and wealthier. We prefer a more targeted approach. I think the biggest beneficiaries will be those who are probably the least able to pay it.

Our sales tax credit, which has been hailed by a whole bunch of people including the Centre for Policy Alternatives, is viewed as a progressive piece of tax policy. We took 90,000 people off the tax rolls entirely; 93% of Ontarians are paying less in overall taxes.

Your tax proposal is regressive, it's costly, and it harms the environment. For that reason, we on this side of the House will likely not be supporting your bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, their plan has led to loss of jobs, lack of growth and a lack of consumer confidence. I'd say it's not working.

Families are the ones that need a desperate break here. The growing cost of living is driving families into debt and it's dragging down Ontario's economy.

The minister says that we cannot afford to help. They're not prepared to help those people.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe this other member would like to rise and ask the question, Speaker.

The minister says that they can't afford over there to help everyday families, notwithstanding the fact that it's everyday families that are feeling the pinch. I would like to know why this minister, why this Deputy Premier has not agreed to have the Auditor General take a today look at his books and a today look at what's happening, so that we can all get an idea of what the Auditor General thinks today.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, what the leader of the third party is proposing that we do with their bill this afternoon is: For her member from Essex, she proposes to raise taxes on greenhouses, which are an important employer in his community. For the members from northern Ontario, she wants to raise taxes on veterinarians for employers in their community. For her members from downtown Toronto, she wants to raise taxes on butchers, on bakeries, on restaurants. Mr. Speaker, she

wants to raise taxes on bookstores. For members from the Niagara region, she wants to raise taxes on grape growers.

These people create jobs. These people are part of a tax plan for jobs and growth that is the right response to our economic circumstances. It's balanced; it's fair. We're not going to support a regressive tax cut for wealthier Ontarians. It will harm the environment. We're sticking with the plan, Mr. Speaker. It's the right plan for the future of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government keeps telling us that there is no revenue to help families, that they simply cannot help families; but billions and billions of dollars are available for corporate tax giveaways, billions of dollars are available for hikes to CEO salaries and billions of dollars are available to move private power plants to help get votes for Liberals.

Speaker, it's families that need a break. It's families that need a break right now here in Ontario. Why does the minister always find money for his misplaced priorities and tell families that they simply have to wait?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Ontario child benefit, \$1.3 billion, is a misplaced priority. She voted against it. I don't think the Ontario clean energy benefit, which lowers everybody's electricity bill by more than she proposes to, is wrong or a bad priority. We think it's the right priority.

1100

Our choice, as we outlined in the election and outlined yesterday, is to create a healthy homes tax credit to help keep our seniors in their homes longer. That has three benefits. Number one: It helps sustain some \$800 million a year in economic activity. Number two: It lowers taxes for seniors and their families. Number three: It helps sustain 10,000 jobs and takes pressure off of future expenditure increases.

That's enlightened public policy. It's about helping people with more modest means and not giving away a tax cut—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please.

I've decided that once the leaders have finished asking their questions, I'll make a comment or two if it's necessary. I think today it's necessary.

Again, I remind you of the trend I noticed yesterday, and I noticed it again today. When somebody asks a question, it's relatively quiet. Then, when somebody tries to answer, it gets very loud. I think there needs to be the balance that we've been looking for.

There are some side conversations going on while somebody else is asking a question. I ask that you refrain from doing that, and I'm going to ask for something a little unorthodox: Use your inside voice. You don't have to yell. If you want to make a point, make your point. You don't have to yell.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The question is to the finance minister. Your volunteer wage freeze gave a complete pass to those in the Working Families Coalition when everyone else in the non-unionized sector was slapped with a pay freeze. The result was the single largest union drive in Ontario's history since the Great Depression.

Your preferential treatment of the Working Families Coalition is swelling their coffers after a \$9-million attack ad campaign on your behalf. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, Ontario families are losing 100 jobs an hour. Is the reason that you will not support our call for a mandatory wage freeze for all public sector employees because the Working Families Coalition won't let you?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My recollection, Mr. Speaker, is that the Chief Electoral Officer found there was no connection between this government and the Working Families Coalition. We've said that in here before.

What I think we have to have—let's take, again, an example of how the Conservatives are simply taking things out of context. She took last month's job numbers, which were bad—they were bad throughout North America—and then took a different divider and produced what is essentially an inaccurate number.

What we have seen since the downturn, Mr. Speaker—what we've seen, frankly, since this government has taken office—is hundreds of thousands of net new jobs. We have passed the employment levels that were present before the downturn. That's been verified by people outside.

That is not to suggest that there is not a huge challenge on jobs. That remains our priority. One of the things we proposed yesterday is this new tax credit, which will help sustain an additional 10,000 jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To Ontario families it seems perfectly reasonable to ask all of us, not just some of us, in the public sector to forgo a pay raise at a time when Ontario families are suffering. We are losing 100 jobs an hour in this province. United States President Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and the Liberal Premiers of British Columbia as well as Quebec agree with us. The only ones who don't seem to get it are this Premier and this finance minister.

The question then becomes why. Is there a connection between your refusal to enact a government-wide wage freeze for all public sector employees and the \$9-million smear campaign that Working Families ran in the last election?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is a line everyone walks, and this one was close. I would ask the member to be very careful in the future. Quite frankly, I will be quicker to have somebody miss their supplementary, if that does indeed happen again.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House would prefer to set aside these politics of division. We have difficult decisions ahead of us, which

requires, obviously, an impassioned debate, but a debate that is important about the future of Ontario.

The louder you yell is not going to shrink the deficit. The louder you yell is not going to put more kids in schools. The louder you yell is not going to open another emergency room.

We have the opportunity as a Legislature to work together. We will obviously work with both opposition parties. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we don't want to force an election right now. We just had one six or seven weeks ago.

I implore the leader of the second party and his caucus: Let's start yelling about the things that are important: how we're going to get back to balance, how we're going to ensure that we continue to have the best schools and health care out—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK
AND FISCAL REVIEW

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Finance: Yesterday's economic outlook puts Ontario's growth at a paltry 1.8% in 2011 and 2012, as opposed to the previous estimates of 2.7% and 2.5%, respectively. This means revenues will be \$1.3 billion lower than estimated in the Liberals' September election platform.

I ask myself: How could the numbers change so dramatically in only a matter of months? Is it possible that the Liberal platform revenue numbers were just a little inflated?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for his question. He's a pretty thoughtful and intelligent guy. He knows how we set our growth estimates. At the time of the budget, we took the consensus estimate of 13 leading economists and set ours 0.2 points below that. Those economists continued to raise their projections, right up until September. It's all well documented publicly. They started to bring them down in September. The consensus is now 2.0% among the economists, and out of an abundance of caution in the fall statement, we set that growth estimate at 1.8%. That has been how successive governments have chosen to approach these important assumptions.

As I say, we have to rely on the best evidence available as we move forward. We've done the prudent thing. I look forward to working with the member and his colleagues as we move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Revenues are \$443 million less than predicted in the budget, mostly because of lower personal income tax collected. And last month's grim employment numbers suggest personal income tax revenues will continue to lag behind previous projections.

New Democrats believe Ontarians deserve an explanation. How could this government be so far off in its projections in such a short period of time?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This is happening to governments right across the country, including the federal government, and in the United States. Private sector economists were very clearly projecting much more robust growth in the spring than they are now. Virtually every government in the country has reduced their projections.

Again, we base our projections on the consensus estimate of 13 leading economists. Sometimes it is remarkably accurate. We're in a much more volatile world. The member opposite, I know, follows events in Europe closely, in the United States, in China and in Japan. Just two days ago, third-quarter US GDP was down-stated. That has an enormous impact, for instance, on the forestry industry in northern Ontario.

These are always difficult, but that is the reality we're faced with. I know we can work together to find very reasonable solutions for dealing with this as we move forward.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Speaker, the global economy is in a fragile state. Economic and fiscal concerns in Europe and the United States are making the news daily, and Ontarians are justifiably trying to understand what this era of uncertainty means for them and their families. Our government was re-elected to provide Ontarians with a stable government capable of managing us through this period of uncertainty.

1110

Ontario is fierce in global competition for jobs and investment. Recent job numbers and economic forecasts have demonstrated that we are truly not isolated from the impact of the global economy.

My constituents and everyone are asking what our government is doing to build a strong economy during these turbulent times.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me begin by congratulating the member for Pickering–Scarborough East on her election. I know she will be another strong voice for Scarborough and Pickering here in this Legislature.

As our throne speech reiterated earlier this week, this government's top priority is jobs and the economy. Building a strong economy starts with the fundamentals, and there are few places, if any in the world, that have done more to build those fundamentals than right here in Ontario. Our investments in health care, education and training have created a world-class workforce. Our investments have helped build a competitive infrastructure system in Ontario—crucial to economic growth. We've improved the tax environment in Ontario, going from the back of the pack to one of the most competitive in all the world.

There is a fierce battle happening around the world for investment and jobs, and Ontario is poised to win that battle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Those steps are good. We've moved Ontario in the right direction, and we will certainly strengthen our economy.

A familiar issue, though, that we hear about is the challenge that businesses, particularly small businesses, face in navigating through the government regulatory requirements that they have to address to do business here. That means reducing duplicate and unnecessary regulations and working closer with other levels of government and even other jurisdictions to improve the business climate here in Ontario.

What specific steps is the government taking to work with businesses and to make the relationship with government easier to navigate while still protecting the health and safety of Ontarians as well as our environment?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Through Open for Business, we're creating faster, smarter and streamlined government-to-business services and regulations that make Ontario more attractive for business development while protecting the public interest, which is also very, very critical.

We've reduced the regulatory burden on businesses and stakeholders by over 17%. That represents a reduction of over 80,000 regulatory requirements. We've improved the environmental approvals process, ensuring that the environment and the public are protected, while making the process clearer for businesses to navigate. In consultation with industry, we've made over 100 time- and cost-saving amendments to existing legislation across 10 ministries through our Open for Business Act.

We've come a long way, but clearly we can and must do more. I look forward to working with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke Centre, in finding ways to take our successful Open for Business initiative to the next level, and I'm looking forward to getting to that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, we heard yesterday that the deficit has gone from \$14 billion last year to \$16 billion projected for this year. Minister, you actually collected almost \$2 billion more in revenue this year than last, but you spent it all, and that's your problem. Yet you still say that you're moving towards a balanced budget by 2017-18. Everyone knows that when you run at a loss one year and increase that loss in the following year, it's a bit of a stretch to project a balanced budget at any time in the near future.

Minister, who do you think is going to believe the figures that you present in your fudge-it budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in the 2010 budget, we laid out a path back to balance that takes us to 2017-18. That was a requirement of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which we had to implement because the government that he was part of, in fact, hid a \$5-billion deficit.

In that plan, we said last year's deficit would be higher than it turned out to be. We had some one-time events that helped bring last year's down, so we did do better last year than had been anticipated.

Right now we are on target to—in that 2010 budget and in that plan, which we did not amend last year, we project a deficit for this year of \$16.3 billion. It is in fact tracking to \$16 billion.

Moving forward, there are real challenges to meeting those targets, but we have no choice but to meet them. I look forward to working with the opposition to meet those targets and to balance—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Only the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government could pat itself on the back and applaud a \$16-billion deficit because it isn't a \$16.3-billion deficit. But you simply moved \$500 million from column A into column B by playing with numbers so that you could make the deficit appear to be improving.

Would the minister confirm to this House that on an apples-to-apples basis, this year's deficit will actually be greater than even his own original projections?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. No, Mr. Speaker, I won't.

The member is accurate: In every budget, governments—by the way, of all political stripes, across all governments—have contingency funds and reserve funds. They set them up precisely for this reason, because projections are inherently wrong sometimes. There are unanticipated challenges—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleagues opposite who were here in 2003 will remember the SARS crisis. The government of the day responded extremely well to that. There was an unanticipated expenditure; that government had built in appropriate reserve and contingency. We had an unusually high number of forest fires this year in Ontario. Those are very difficult to predict, so it is quite reasonable, quite responsible, to set up reserve and contingency.

We do use those funds up. We do use them to offset things like unanticipated declines in revenue. Some years, they work to your advantage.

We'll continue to do that. We'll continue to move towards a balanced budget, and I hope we can all work together—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Later today, members in this House will be voting on my bill to take the unfair HST off of home heating. There are members on the government benches who would undoubtedly support this bill, provided they were free to do so. Has the Premier's office been giving instructions to MPPs on how to vote?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I will personally be here to vote against that bill, because it's wrong tax policy.

The member opposite proposes to raise taxes on a number of important companies in his riding, companies that are struggling to create jobs. I remind the member opposite that we created the Ontario clean energy benefit, which takes 10% off of electricity bills for those people who heat by electricity in rural northern Ontario. That is a substantial portion of the population.

The price of natural gas and natural gas bills have come down dramatically in the last three or four years because of the discovery of shale gas.

I would much rather not raise the taxes on every bakery and restaurant in Algoma-Manitoulin. I would much rather keep those funds in the provincial treasury to help invest in better health care in Algoma-Manitoulin, to help invest in better schools in Algoma-Manitoulin, to help lessen the abhorrent condition of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, MPPs were elected to stand up for their constituents, not the Premier's office.

There is support from MPPs on all sides of this House to take the HST off of home heating, including on the government side. Just last week, the member from Niagara Falls said he'd support this bill.

Will the Premier's office be forcing Liberal MPPs to vote against my bill? Will the Acting Premier guarantee a free vote?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, it'll be interesting to see if there's a free vote in the NDP caucus.

I say to my colleague opposite—I in fact said publicly during the election and I said before the election that I would not support this. I remain steadfast in that position. I was elected—my colleagues agreed with our tax plan for jobs and growth. All members will vote the way they will, I suspect, except probably for the NDP caucus, who obviously have a heavy whip on this vote.

1120

I plead with the member opposite: Don't raise taxes on the farms in your riding. Don't raise taxes on the restaurants and the businesses that are creating jobs in your riding, which is struggling with a high rate of unemployment. This will harm the environment.

I would like to know how the member for Toronto-Danforth can stand up against his former colleagues at Greenpeace and people like David Suzuki and others. We will have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Energy. During the recent provincial election, our party and the PC Party had different views on many issues, but there was one issue we both agreed on: relocating the Mississauga gas plant. Our party committed to relocating it and the Leader of the Opposition supported our decision. In fact, days before the election, when the media asked the Leader of the Opposition if he would scrap the Mississauga plant were he to form a government, he replied, "That's right. Done, done, done, done." So I'm pleased to report that our government is honouring its commitment. The company building the gas plant has agreed to permanently stop construction—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —immediately and begin discussions to relocate. Promise made; promise kept.

Can the Minister of Energy please explain what this agreement means for the residents of Mississauga and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, and congratulations to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for her hard work and her election.

It's already clear, as it was on this issue, as it will be on so many others, that she is going to stand up for the people she represents. She and this government made a clear commitment to the residents of Mississauga and Etobicoke: "There will not be a gas plant on this site." And I was delighted when the Ontario Power Authority and Greenfield South agreed that construction would stop. There will not be a gas plant on this site, and they are working now on the details of the relocation of that gas generating facility—exactly what we said to the residents of Mississauga and Etobicoke.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for sharing that with this House. Clearly, the concerns of my constituents and community were heard.

Minister, in your answer you said that discussions are under way between the Ontario Power Authority and Greenfield to find a new location for the natural gas plant. However, many of my constituents are concerned that the relocation of the site will be picked at random and might end up even closer to where they live. Can the Minister of Energy state what is being done to ensure that the new location of the natural gas plant is selected with the community in mind?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, that's a really good question, that is a very good question, and it's been apparent that the guidelines that were once thought to be appropriate for siting these gas generating facilities, which are important enormously important to the residents of these communities and others, could be strengthened, so what we're doing right now is taking a look at

the approach in other jurisdictions throughout North America to see what approach they have brought to combine the best science, the best power judgments and the input of residents to make sure that as we locate, as we choose from sites, we have the strongest possible approach always to ensure that we have reliable and safe, clean power that supports jobs in our communities and is affordable in our communities, where they need it, as they need it, when they need it.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. As you know, there are over 500,000 job-killing regulations currently on the books here in Ontario, and in October alone over 75,000 full-time jobs were lost. In fact, seven out of 10 jobs being lost across Canada are being lost right here in Ontario.

My riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and indeed most of southwestern Ontario, has been hard hit with ongoing plant closures and job losses. Please tell me, will your government continue to lay the blame at the feet of others, or will you take a look in the mirror, accept responsibility, and free job creators so that they can create jobs and grow our economy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I welcome the member to this Legislature and I thank him for the question.

He does touch on what is a very important topic. In fact, in our throne speech earlier this week there's no question that jobs and economic growth are our number one priority. Mr. Speaker, we have worked tirelessly to put the fundamentals in place to make Ontario one of the best places in the world to invest and one of the best places in the world to create jobs. But the party opposite has voted against just about everything we've done to put those strong fundamentals in place. They voted against our tax reform which made Ontario one of the best places to invest in the world. They voted against our efforts to improve our education system, our health care system, providing one of the most progressive, one of the most skilled, and one of the most educated workforces in the world.

I look forward to the member opposite thinking long and hard about these issues, and perhaps in the future, maybe in this minority Parliament, we'll have a little bit more co-operation from the party opposite when it comes to building—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I may be new to this House but I'm quickly learning that answers from this government are hard to come by. So let me try again.

As you know, under the McGuinty government, small businesses face the worst regulatory burden in the country. I can tell you, coming from a small business background, that this is absolutely true.

During the recent election campaign, I told constituents that if I didn't deliver on my election promises to

reduce government red tape by 30%, my paycheque would be docked. Are you willing to put your money where your mouth is and offer to take a reduction in pay if you are unable to reduce the regulatory burden on Ontario businesses?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the member for his question and I really do appreciate his passion for supporting our Open for Business initiatives. We've reduced the regulatory burden on businesses by 17%. That represents 80,000 regulatory requirements that have been gone.

But we know and we plan to move further when it comes to moving our Open for Business to the next level. I'll be working with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke Centre. I strongly recommend to the member opposite, if he has constructive ideas about how we can reduce the burden on business, to bring them directly to myself or to my parliamentary assistant. We welcome their input. This is something we can do together, but those ideas must be constructive, realistic, and not contrary to the public interest, to the environment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. According to the Ministry of Health, Speaker, children are waiting hundreds of days more than they should for surgery at Hamilton Health Sciences. The McMaster site, in fact, was converted to primarily focus on children.

What explanation does the government have for parents waiting as long as a year, or in some cases more, for their children to have needed surgery?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It is good to see the leader of the third party standing up for that hospital that she had so attacked in the election.

We on this side of the House found those numbers very challenging, and I acknowledge the real issue with pediatric services there. I would remind the member that prior to us coming to office we didn't even count wait times; now we do. We know where we're not meeting standards.

1130

I concur with her that there's more work to do there. I know the Minister of Health, who is ably representing Ontario at the provincial health ministers' meeting today, is well advised on this issue. I look forward to working with you and the other members from Hamilton as we move to address these very serious challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Children and their families are waiting 421 days for jaw surgery, 324 days for kidney operations and 282 days for reconstructive surgery. The maximum wait for children's surgery should be 182 days. Now, the chief of surgery says that it's the result of funding reductions, and I quote: "There has been a contraction in that envelope in the last couple of years."

The Ministry of Health promised changes that would make services better for kids in Hamilton. Why are children still waiting for over a year for their needed surgeries in that community?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, Mr. Speaker, I concur with the member that there's obviously a challenge there. I would like to remind her, however, that because of restructuring that we did we now actually have a children's centre in Hamilton, which is important. I concur fully with her that the challenges being experienced there are not acceptable. The Minister of Health, I know, is working on this issue.

I would remind the member that I would much rather take the \$350 million she proposes in a tax cut and use that money on children's pediatric services, Mr. Speaker. I'd invite her to rethink her priorities because in this day and age you can't have it both ways. You've got to find the right balance. I will err on the side of children's pediatric services and be consistent throughout question period and not say one thing about cutting revenues, spend more money and eventually drive Ontario's economy down. We're about building it up. I look forward to working with her on children's pediatric services in Hamilton and across the province.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, I get a lot of telephone calls and letters from constituents asking me to advocate on their behalf on a whole host of issues, but one of the most troublesome that I get is the large number of complaints having to do with outstanding employment standards claims for unpaid wages and the length of time it takes to process them in your ministry. There is a backlog there.

My constituents have got bills to pay. They're frustrated. They want to get on with their lives. They want their back wages in their pocket. I'm told that there is a backlog there, that your ministry is working on the backlog, but Minister, what are you actually doing to tackle that backlog?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Willowdale for the question. Over the last several years, my ministry has definitely seen a substantial increase in the number of claims it receives. In fact, last year it received about 17,000 claims. The volume unfortunately resulted in increased wait times over the years and it did create a backlog in the claims processing system.

However, I have significant progress that I can share with this House. In 2010 we invested an additional \$6 million, and I'm pleased to report that that investment helped us tackle that backlog. We're ahead of schedule; we've eliminated the backlog five months early.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff in the Ministry of Labour for their hard work to make this possible. We continue to work hard to make improvements, to make adjustments, because my ministry cares deeply and works hard to ensure that Ontario workers' rights are protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad that you're taking some aggressive action to tackle this backlog issue. But my constituents are smart. They know that you're tackling the backlog, but their real question now is, what are we doing to make sure that this tackling exercise is not just a quick fix? What about long-term solutions?

Can you tell me what the ministry is doing to ensure that the backlog does not reoccur and that the backlog, once down, stays down, that we have more than just a quick fix here?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: We are committed to keeping the backlog at bay. We're going to be vigilant to ensure that it doesn't balloon again. To that end, we've worked hard over the last several months to modernize our employment standards program.

Here's a snapshot of some of the initiatives and actions we've taken. We have a two-step investigation process where claims are streamed for early resolution and parties are given an opportunity to resolve the issue. We've increased outreach, education, enforcement and prosecution. We've also introduced a number of online tools that are going to help employers and employees better understand the act, which helps us resolve the claims faster. About 450,000 people have used these tools since they were launched.

In short, we're reducing the number of claims by increasing awareness and reaching out to employers and employees. We will continue to work on behalf of Ontario employees to ensure that their employment standards rights are protected.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, congratulations on your election.

Applause.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm assuming you'll grant me the appropriate time for my question.

In Tuesday's throne speech, the government stated that Ontario families "need to know that their government is there for them." The residents and business community of York region will be interested to know if that commitment extends to them as they struggle with the personal and economic hardships of a transit strike that is now in its fifth week in York region and far from any sense of a resolution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To which minister, please?

Mr. Frank Klees: This is to the Deputy Premier.

Seniors can't get to medical appointments, students can't get to classes, and jobs are being lost.

I ask the Deputy Premier, can the residents and the business community of York region count on him and his government to support the back-to-work legislation that will be voted on this afternoon?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm certainly sympathetic to the York region residents who have been affected by this work stoppage. We understand that transit strikes are inconvenient to residents who need to get to work, school and medical appointments.

As a government, we believe in collective bargaining. We encourage the employer and the employees of the union to return to the table. We share the same desire that the member does to get back to the table and to have our transit service up and running again.

In fact, in the early weeks I reached out to the members from Thornhill, York–Simcoe and Newmarket–Aurora to offer my assistance. We have mediators that are standing by. They're very successful, and I would encourage the parties to get back to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it took this government less than 48 hours to pass back-to-work legislation when the TTC was on strike here in the city of Toronto. Earlier this year, this government—the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Labour included—voted for Bill 150, which ensured that fair negotiations and a settlement would take place and would ensure that no future disruption of transit services would take place in the city of Toronto. The people of York region—the residents and business community—deserve nothing less.

I would like to know once again from the Deputy Premier, from the Minister of Labour, will she agree, will this government agree, to treat York region's residents and business community with the same fairness and consideration as they treat the city of Toronto and pass that legislation when it's voted on in this House later this afternoon?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Certainly, for the sake of the community and the families who rely on York transit, we urge the parties to come back to the table. I believe all parties around the table want those parties to come back to have the conversation, and that's why our Ministry of Labour negotiators, our mediators, are available. They have a good track record. They usually help get these issues resolved. We want to make sure that happens. We understand that the York dispute is an inconvenience; we're very sympathetic. Again, we offer our assistance. Our mediators are standing by. They want to be helpful. For the sake of the community and the families who rely on the transit, we urge the parties to get back to the table. Certainly, we want to make that happen, and our services are available at any time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House is in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

ESTIMATES

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March

31, 2012, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly—Toronto, November 23, 2011.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great privilege to take this opportunity to welcome to Queen's Park some very special guests who are in attendance today to support the introduction of the Ontario One Call Act.

In the west members' gallery, from the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, is Jim Douglas; from Avertex Utility, Bob McKee; from the city of Toronto, Gord MacMillan; from Union Gas, Matthew Gibson, Paul Ungerma, Laura Whitwham, Chris Chetley, Peter Koepfgen, Octavian Ghiricociu and Joe McCartney; and from Enbridge, Matthew Jackson, Sean Bolan, Grant Kilpatrick, Greg Knopinski and Ophir Wainer. Thank you, and welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRENT McKAGUE

TAMMY FISCHER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to congratulate and recognize two outstanding individuals and award winners from my riding of Huron–Bruce. Actually, they're from my hometown of Teeswater as well, so we have a theme going here today.

Last Friday, Brent McKague, better known to his family and friends as "Chief," was awarded the Junior Manufacturer of the Year Award at the 2011 Huron Manufacturing Excellence Awards.

Brent graduated from Fanshawe College with a degree in mechanical engineering technology. Since Brent joined R&R Machine and Tool Inc., the company has been able to use his expertise to develop a progressive die that his company was able to manufacture for Anx Metal Products.

Brent was happy to return home and work for a small business in rural Ontario where he grew up. Incidentally, some of you may have visited his home farm, as the McKague family hosted the 2008 International Plowing Match.

Secondly, Tammy Fischer was named winner of the Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture at this year's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Tammy won first place in the senior competition for her speech outlining the top five facts about farming that every Canadian should know.

I want to recognize both Tammy and Brent as community leaders. They are the future of our manufacturing and agriculture sectors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SECOND CHANCE PET NETWORK

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I rise today to recognize Second Chance Pet Network, a regional animal welfare

organization that provides outstanding services to many communities throughout my riding of Kenora–Rainy River.

Second Chance was founded in 2009. With no animal rescue organizations servicing many of the communities in my riding, the volunteers throughout the district came together to find a solution. Within months, they had already spearheaded a progressive trap, spay and neuter program for feral cats, offered low-cost spay and neuter programs, and created a pet food bank to help low-income families with pets, while offering adoption services out of a pet supply store before they were able to finance their own storefront location. Volunteers even took over municipal pet adoption duties to help improve the coordination of animal control and adoption services.

Earlier this year, Second Chance broke ground on a permanent building, using donations and corporate grants to create a permanent solution to these issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them for their efforts and offer my sincere hope that this government will see the value in the work that organizations like Second Chance do, and that the government will soon offer some sustainable funding to help them and other animal welfare service providers across the province so that they can continue to provide these important services.

ST. JOHN'S REHAB HOSPITAL

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, I am happy to rise to tell you about something that's happening in Willowdale at St. John's Rehab Hospital. The hospital has been in existence since 1937. It was founded by the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine. The hospital has pioneered an important level of care as the first hospital in the GTA to specialize in rehabilitation.

In particular, on November 3 I was there with Minister Matthews, and we celebrated the grand opening of the John C. and Sally Horsfall Eaton Centre for Ambulatory Care. The province contributed \$35 million. Mrs. Eaton contributed \$5 million to the project and for ongoing research in the field of rehabilitation.

The hospital continues to respond to the needs of the community. It has become important in the future of our health care here in Ontario. It does rehabilitation work with patients suffering from strokes, cancer, cardiac arrest and a host of other issues.

I want to say a very sincere thank you to everybody who participated in getting this project up and running, especially the private donors. It is a recognition of the importance of St. John's in our health care system in Ontario. It's one of the jewels in the crown of my riding of Willowdale.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The one beside it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, the other guy.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin–Middlesex–London.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes. I'm looking at the wrong one. Elgin–Middlesex.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your election, and congratulations to the members on re-election and election.

I'm proud to serve the residents of Elgin–Middlesex–London. On their behalf, I take exception to how the government is portraying the auto sector. This government would lead you to believe that the auto sector is strong and growing. It's simply not true. Three factories in my riding have closed in the last two years—two in the last month. Sterling, Ford and Lear, which alone contributed 6,000 jobs at their peak, have now left our local economy. These are not examples of a strong, growing auto sector. These effects ripple through local economies. The closure of Ford alone has taken away 25% of the tax assessment of the municipality of Southwold.

We need the government to take off their rose-coloured glasses and see the real, true picture of how their economic policies are hurting rural Ontario. The auto sector is failing. The government is failing rural Ontario, and the government is failing the residents of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

EVENTS IN TIBET

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to extend my congratulations to you and to all the members of the House who have been re-elected.

I stand today to bring your attention to an appalling human tragedy. I sent out a letter to all members about the situation in Tibet on behalf of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, which is a sister organization of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet in Ottawa.

Since March, 11 young Tibetans in Tibet have self-immolated—set themselves on fire—nine in the last month, and at least six have died, including two nuns.

This grows out of the increasing repression against Tibetans and particularly against a monastery, one of the largest, called Kirti Monastery, in Ngaba. I ask that all members go to the website and sign a petition.

1310

So far in the last three weeks, 600,000 people around the world have signed this petition, standing along with His Holiness the Dalai Lama to call for an end to this repression of religion, particularly the Buddhist religion, in Tibet and of Tibetans generally, many of whom have been incarcerated. Many seniors have been beaten to death. The deaths continue, and the world isn't watching. We want the world to watch. We want the world to know.

It has been said that unless you stand with the oppressed, you stand with the oppressor. Here's a chance for every member in this House to stand with the oppressed, to stand up and ask for our national governments to do the same, to stand for human rights and to say so loudly and proudly on behalf of those who are not getting a voice.

This is spreading. There are another 40 Tibetans waiting to self-immolate as we speak. The deaths will continue until we, as citizens in a democracy, do something about it.

I urge you: Please go to standupfortibet.org, sign your name, get involved, get active. I also invite you all to join the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet.

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: November is Diabetes Awareness Month and November 14 is World Diabetes Day.

Ninety years ago, Canada gave the life-saving gift of insulin to the world. World Diabetes Day, especially this year, is an opportunity for Canadians to come together and celebrate this important discovery. Today 1,169,000 people in Ontario have been diagnosed with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes, representing approximately 8.3% of the population. This number is expected to continue to grow, resulting in not only a personal crisis for people with the disease but also a tremendous financial burden on the Ontario health care system and our economy. By ensuring that people with diabetes receive the support they need to manage their illness, we are ensuring a sustainable future for all Ontarians.

I ask the members of this Legislature to join me in commemorating national Diabetes Awareness Month and World Diabetes Day.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your being the Speaker.

I want to send a message. The people of York region who depend on public transit have one message for this government: They have had enough of the transit strike and they want it to end. They have had enough of being victims without anyone listening to them. They have had enough of taking cabs to get to work, missing appointments and, for some, missing school.

They want someone to listen. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our party is listening and we are acting. I am very proud that my friend and colleague the member for Thornhill has introduced a bill to end this strike through arbitration and to make transit in York region an essential service just like this government did for Toronto, because our constituents deserve the same consideration and the same respect as people in the city of Toronto.

I wonder if the Liberal members from York region will stand up for their constituents and vote to end the strike. Will they speak out for the thousands of people in their ridings who depend on transit, or will they remain the silent four?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, all residents of Ajax and Pickering congratulate you and every person elected to this special House who are here.

Generations of Ontarians have worked together in good times and bad to build this great province. But the McGuinty government recognizes that the next generation will face even bigger challenges and, in an increasingly competitive global economy, those jurisdictions that make the smartest investments in education will have the edge.

I'm proud of the commitment our government has shown to prepare our children for this new marketplace of ideas. Since 2003, Ontario's investment in education has grown substantially and our students haven't lost a single teaching hour to labour action. Now more of our students are graduating from high school and more of our students are doing better in reading, writing and mathematics. It's clear that our commitment to education is paying bigger dividends far into the future.

But it takes all Ontarians working together to build a best future workforce. In particular, the contribution made by Ontario teachers is crucial to ensuring our children realize their fullest potential. Teachers have been entrusted with a vital task, and with hard work, dedication and genuine passion, they are preparing our next generation of good citizens and global workers.

A great teacher can inspire students to do great things, and I see an enormous number of great teachers in our province. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ontario's teachers for all the work that they do in helping us to secure our province's continued leadership and prosperity.

RM AUTO RESTORATION AND RM CLASSIC CARS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment as our Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as every member of this House is aware, the entrepreneurial spirit of Ontario businesses burns strong, despite continued neglect by their government.

I rise today to pay tribute to a business that has proudly bucked the trend that has plagued far too many Ontario automobile businesses, to become a world-renowned leader in the automotive field.

RM Auto Restoration and RM Classic Cars is a company headquartered in my riding, Chatham–Kent–Essex, with a strong 35-year history of providing the highest-quality automobiles to customers around the world—that includes Jay Leno, by the way—and continuing to offer quality employment here in Ontario.

Founded as a small, single-car garage in 1976, this small business has grown into the world's largest auction house for quality automobiles. RM proudly holds four of the top five all-time records for motor cars sold at auctions, and year after year, RM Auto Restoration's work garners international awards and accolades across the globe.

Owners Rob Myers, Mike Fairbairn and Dan Warrener are solid corporate citizens who are using their business

success to revitalize the downtown core of Chatham. Earlier this month, they were recognized by the Chatham-Kent Community Foundation for their outstanding contributions to the community.

Mr. Speaker, as a business owner myself, I understand how difficult it is to be an entrepreneur in Ontario today. I want to offer my congratulations to these outstanding entrepreneurs and pillars of the community from my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege: Today, private members' business will be debated, and many of those bills may pass second reading today. However, those movers will be asked to refer a bill to a committee that has not yet been duly constituted by this House. Under these conditions, we are in fact demanding the members to make uninformed decisions without the requisite knowledge or legislative approval. This invariably will be detrimental and may prejudice the members in their further discussions on their private members' business. This clearly disadvantages all members of this House.

The introduction of bills without an approved motion to populate the legislative committees, in my view, constitutes a breach of privilege and demonstrates a level of neglect for both the members of the Legislative Assembly and their constituents.

The government appears to not have regard for the importance of having our committees duly constituted in a timely fashion so that members can knowledgeably refer their private members' bills and motions to an appropriate committee at the time of second reading. As of today, the government has not yet brought a motion to populate the legislative committees with members of this House.

One of the things new members are often told upon coming into this Legislature is that much of the work of the Legislature is done not in the House but in committees. Committees are a crucial and essential component of our parliamentary system. Committees are, in fact, due process of the legislative system. Members are not able to do their work nor serve their constituents properly until committees are duly constituted by this House.

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Speaker, I understand that in the standing orders the government does have 10 days to constitute those committees. However, this is also a minority government, and unlike in a majority government, where the population of the committees may not be that important at a time when the government is in control of those committees, in a minority Parliament it is indeed fundamental that these committees are populated promptly.

Speaker, due to the urgency of this matter, as members are preparing for second reading of their bills and in the absence of a motion to duly constitute the standing committees of this House, I believe that this matter constitutes a matter of privilege, and I would ask you to rule upon this. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for submitting the written portion of his discussion for my consideration, so I shall rule. The issue raised by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has, in fact, been a matter for recent discussion among those around this place who have a role or interest in the business of the House.

First, what the member raises is more appropriately a point of order, not a point of privilege, so I will address it as such. Standing order 108 provides for the appointment of the membership of the committees within the first 10 sessional days of Parliament. Today is, of course, only the fourth day of this new Parliament, and so the member simply does not have a valid point of order.

However, let me address the issue in a little more detail for the member. The committees of this Legislature, and there are nine of them provided for in the standing orders, exist as permanent bodies by virtue of their continuing orders of reference in standing order 108. Without membership, however, the committees are obviously unable to perform any work. As mentioned, though, the House has given itself 10 days to assign members to its committees.

As permanent subordinate bodies of the Legislature, the committees are able to receive referrals of bills and other matters, as the House sees fit to make, whether or not the committee membership has been struck. Indeed, the very structure of the standing orders contemplates that this can happen in that the House can consider business during its first 10 sitting days that could result in a referral to one of its committees. If it does, such a committee is fully eligible to receive business from the House, even without presently having members assigned to it at this time. Its members, once appointed, will simply inherit the agenda items that preceded them to the committee.

As the member has pointed out, this could even happen today in private members' business. I would point out that in fact this has already happened today. A few moments ago, the Minister of Finance tabled the 2011-12 estimates. Upon being tabled, they have been referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates by virtue of standing order 59. This is perfectly in order, as would be the scenario that the member has raised.

I thank the member for his presentation.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

YORK REGION TRANSIT LABOUR
DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT
DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL
AU SEIN DES SERVICES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving companies that provide public transit services to The Regional Municipality of York / Projet de loi 7, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail au sein des entreprises qui fournissent des services de transport en commun dans la municipalité régionale de York.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker. This bill, to be debated this afternoon, seeks to end a labour dispute that has gone on for five weeks in York region and to declare transit an essential service in that region.

ONTARIO ONE CALL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR ONTARIO ONE CALL

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd. /
Projet de loi 8, Loi sur Ontario One Call Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a brief statement.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. I'd first like to recognize the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who is the co-sponsor of this bill.

Ontario One Call is a corporation currently operating in Ontario. Ontario One Call provides information to excavators and homeowners about the location of underground infrastructure.

This act would require that persons or entities specified in the act become members of the corporation and provide information to it. When a member of the corporation receives information about a proposed excavation or dig, that member is required to mark the location of its underground infrastructure in the vicinity of the excavation or dig site, or indicate that its infrastructure will not be affected by the excavation or dig. The act would also create offences for failure to comply with the act or regulations under it.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 71(a), the order for second reading of Bill 7, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving companies that provide public transit services to The Regional Municipality of York, may be called during consideration of private members' public business today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, la semaine dernière, les francophones de l'Ontario ont célébré le 25^e anniversaire de l'adoption de la Loi sur les services en français par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

We recall that it was Premier David Peterson and his minister responsible for francophone affairs, Bernard Grandmaître, who, with courage and determination, introduced the final bill defining the framework for the delivery of French-language services by the Ontario government. The French Language Services Act was adopted unanimously on November 18, 1986.

Les trois partis politiques doivent s'en féliciter parce que tous les députés ont su s'élever au-dessus de toute idéologie partisane afin de protéger et promouvoir un plus grand bien. Ces félicitations sont d'autant plus méritées que le contexte politique du temps ne se prêtait pas bien à une telle collaboration. Et je tiens à remercier les députés et ministres qui ont fait l'honneur à la tradition de justice dont l'Ontario est si fier.

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Vingt-cinq ans plus tard, nous comprenons tous que, dans une province aussi multiculturelle que la nôtre, nous ne pouvons pas nous réclamer une terre d'accueil sans pratiquer l'équité envers nos propres minorités issues de l'un des peuples fondateurs du Canada.

Bien sûr, la loi est essentielle. On sait maintenant qu'il s'agissait d'un grand début, mais il fallait aussi et surtout transformer les services gouvernementaux en français de manière systémique.

Since 2003, the government has been committed to putting structuring and transformative measures in place within the government and in Ontario society as a whole. For this government, Francophonie is a fundamental component in the province's advancement and economic prosperity in an officially bilingual country.

Le bilan parle par lui-même. Grâce au leadership de notre premier ministre McGuinty, des pas de géant ont été faits en moins de 10 ans. Depuis 2003, la municipalité de Callander et les cités de Brampton et Kingston portent

à 25 le nombre de régions désignées qui offrent des services en français.

We have granted self-governance by and for francophones to TFO, the French-language public television network, that exports its television and multi-media products to other provinces and through international projects. And for the past two years, on September 25, the province's francophones have celebrated their identity and their contribution to Ontario on Franco-Ontarian Day.

Notre gouvernement a élargi la définition de francophone dans le but d'être plus inclusif, et tous et toutes reconnaissent la grande qualité de notre système d'éducation en langue française, de l'élémentaire, en passant par le secondaire, jusqu'au postsecondaire et, avec fierté, j'ajoute la petite enfance, qui est tellement importante pour mon gouvernement.

Je pense qu'il faut, au passage, saluer les anciens premiers ministres John Robarts et Bill Davis, qui ont reconnu l'importance critique d'offrir l'éducation en langue française, et cela bien avant l'adoption de la Loi sur les services en français.

On peut également se féliciter pour toutes les réalisations dans les services de santé, surtout que depuis l'an dernier, nous avons de nouvelles entités de planification francophone partout dans la province.

Ne serait-ce que dans mon comté, monsieur le Président, il faut voir l'attrait du système de santé de l'Ontario pour les professionnels de la santé des autres provinces qui veulent venir pratiquer leur profession en Ontario.

A new regulation adopted last June sets stronger guidelines on French-language service delivery by third parties that obtain contracts from the government of Ontario in all areas, including health. When a society attracts professionals, that's when you can talk about real economic prosperity and long-term quality of life.

Le gouvernement a toujours été convaincu qu'il fallait aussi un commissaire aux services en français en Ontario. Certes, il a été nommé plus de 20 ans après l'adoption de la loi, mais il s'agit néanmoins d'une très grande avancée. Le commissaire aux services en français constitue, à mon avis, une nouvelle pièce maîtresse du cheminement des francophones.

As we all heard yesterday, this government has a very focused but progressive agenda for its new mandate. We have recognized the importance of helping our seniors live healthy lives in their own homes and the importance of higher education for Ontarians. In these areas, as in all our efforts, Ontario's francophones will continue to benefit, to prosper and to thrive.

Monsieur le Président, j'invite donc tous et toutes mes collègues députés à célébrer l'unité et la collaboration entourant la Loi sur les services en français, et j'exprime le souhait que ces mêmes valeurs guident notre détermination à travailler ensemble pour un plus grand bien, cette fois-ci celui de la prospérité pour tous les citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Responses?

M. Peter Shurman: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je suis très heureux, à titre de porte-parole de l'opposition pour les affaires francophones, de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux franco-ontariens et franco-ontariennes pour l'identification du 25^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français.

C'est nécessaire, de temps en temps, de se souvenir que notre communauté francophone est une des deux nations fondatrices de notre province. En fait, nous avons créé, l'année passée, un jour spécial, soit le 25 septembre, pour commémorer les franco-ontariens et franco-ontariennes, mais ce n'est pas suffisant.

Un drapeau, un jour et une loi sur les services en français, mes chers amis, une nation francophone.

Ici, en Ontario, nous avons pris des initiatives variées pendant les années pour signaler que notre monde francophone est important dans un sens très spécial. Nous devons garder comme spéciale cette importante section de notre grande population ontarienne.

Le drapeau franco-ontarien fut adopté en 1977. C'est symbolique. Je suis très fier d'en avoir un dans mon propre bureau. Mes visiteurs me demandent fréquemment l'origine de ce drapeau et c'est mon plaisir de l'expliquer. Maintenant nous avons, en Ontario, un jour exceptionnel pour élever notre communauté francophone, pour célébrer notre francophonie.

Mais la Loi sur les services en français n'est pas un symbole; c'est un effort actuel pour rendre égales les activités des citoyens en relation avec leur province.

De la part du caucus progressiste-conservateur, j'offre les salutations de notre leader, M. Tim Hudak.

Nous devons reconnaître le rôle spécial qu'occupe la communauté francophone dans l'histoire de notre province. La présence francophone en Ontario date de 400 ans. Ils sont parmi les premiers peuples fondateurs de notre merveilleuse nation, et depuis 25 ans nous avons des protections pour notre communauté francophone avec la Loi sur les services en français.

Pour la majorité du XX^e siècle et au-delà, le Parti PC a contribué à la promotion et à la conservation de l'aspect unique que tient cette communauté en Ontario. Le dynamisme de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture française demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne. Un aspect de cette santé que nous voyons quotidiennement est un résultat des services disponibles en français.

Félicitations, et merci.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Moi aussi, ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de me joindre à mes deux autres collègues pour célébrer le 25^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français.

Moi, je me souviens très bien de quand cette loi-là a passé. Je me souviens que j'étais physiothérapeute à l'Hôpital Laurentien—ça n'existe plus; ça a un nouveau nom. J'avais trois petits enfants à la maison et j'avais les

cheveux longs. Je me souviens de tout ça. Mais je me souviens surtout que ça avait été une bataille où on a finalement vu un Parlement qui était uni.

Du côté des néo-démocrates, notre appui pour les services en français n'a pas changé. Je suis extrêmement fière de dire que dans mon caucus, présentement, on a près de 50 % des néo-démocrates qui sont soit franco-ontariens ou franco-ontariennes ou qui peuvent s'exprimer en français. C'est quelque chose dont je suis extrêmement fière.

On a parlé aujourd'hui de plusieurs petits pas qui ont été faits pendant les 25 ans depuis la proclamation de la Loi sur les services en français. Je suis fière des petits pas que l'on a faits. Chacun de ces pas nous ramène plus près du but à atteindre. Mais le but à atteindre est encore loin, monsieur le Président. Si on n'est pas capable de se décider à faire des grands pas, est-ce qu'on pourrait au moins faire des petits pas plus rapidement? Peut-être que ça nous amènerait là où on veut aller également plus rapidement.

Je vais vous donner quelques idées. Dans un premier temps, je suis extrêmement fière de notre commissaire aux services en français. M. Boileau, c'était un bon choix; il fait du bon travail. Ses rapports sont pertinents, bien faits et résonnent au son de la communauté franco-ontarienne. Mais pourquoi est-ce qu'il n'a pas le droit de relever de cette Assemblée? Pourquoi, contrairement à tous les autres commissaires de l'Assemblée, lui, il relève d'une ministre déléguée aux services en français? Pourquoi on ne le met pas sur le même pied d'assise que les autres commissaires? Pour moi, ça serait un pas de plus vers les services en français, vers la francophonie.

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Un autre point important : il n'y a même pas 50 % des municipalités qui font partie de l'Association des municipalités de langue française de l'Ontario qui ont un plan pour offrir des services en français. Il me semble que comme gouvernement provincial, on pourrait les encourager un petit peu eux-mêmes aussi. Là, on est à 50 %. Ça fait 25 ans qu'on a la Loi sur les services en français. On est prêt à faire plus que ça, non?

Un autre—c'en est un que je n'ai pas digéré et je ne le digérerai probablement jamais—c'est la maternelle à temps plein. Quand le gouvernement a sorti sa maternelle à temps plein, c'était une nouveauté dont personne n'avait jamais entendu parler. Bien voyons donc! Ça faisait 10 ans que tous les conseils francophones dans l'Ontario offraient la maternelle à temps plein. Ils l'avaient développée d'une façon qui était pour et par les francophones et qui fonctionnait. Est-ce qu'on a regardé ça? Pantoute; on a ignoré ce que les francophones avaient fait et puis on a développé un modèle qui ne respectait pas ce que les francophones avaient mis en place. Je peux parler pour ma communauté; le Carrefour francophone a failli faire banqueroute à cause du modèle qui avait été imposé par le gouvernement McGuinty. Ils ont reculé, oui, c'est vrai, après une poussée incroyable de toute la communauté franco-ontarienne qui leur a dit, « Whoa! On n'acceptera pas ça. » Mais ils ont reculé trop tard,

monsieur le Président. Les dommages avaient déjà été faits.

On parle également, pendant qu'on parle de petits pas, de nos conseils scolaires—le financement des conseils scolaires. Je suis extrêmement fière qu'on ait des conseils scolaires francophones. Bravo. Ça a été un pas dans la bonne direction, mais est-ce qu'on ne pourrait pas les financer de façon équitable aux conseils scolaires anglophones? Il me semble que ça aussi, ça améliorerait les services en français.

Parlant d'éducation, quand est-ce qu'on va avoir une université désignée sous la Loi sur les services en français? Petite enfance, c'est bien—le primaire, le secondaire, le collégial. On est dû. On est dû pour avoir de l'éducation universitaire sous la Loi sur les services en français. On n'est pas là encore en Ontario. Comme je vous dis, ce n'est pas souvent des grands pas que je veux; c'est une suite logique des choses. Mais, on ne les a pas faites encore.

Un point extrêmement important—je vois que le temps me manque—c'est la perception. M^{me} Linda Cardinal, une professeure de sciences politiques à l'Université d'Ottawa, a étudié la question. Qu'on parle des tribunaux, de la police, des services d'urgence, des cliniques d'aide juridique, des services aux victimes, de la société d'aide à l'enfance, 80 % des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ne demandent pas leurs services en français parce que s'ils les demandent, ils sont traités de quémandeurs. Ils sont traités de faiseurs de trouble. Ici même à l'Assemblée, ce n'est pas souvent qu'on entend parler français.

Joyeux 25^e anniversaire, tout le monde.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH
MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION
DE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Hon. John Milloy: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in recognition of Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent for five minutes for each party? Agreed? Agreed.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: And minister responsible for women's issues, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I thought you would include that in your five-minute speech. That's why—

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you. I'm very pleased to rise today in that regard to recognize November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour commémorer le mois de novembre, qui est le Mois de la prévention de la violence faite aux femmes en Ontario.

Today we acknowledge the need to continue to work together to prevent violence against women, and we recognize that it is everyone's responsibility to end woman abuse. Woman abuse is insidious; much of it goes unreported. And it can take many forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse.

In spite of under-reporting, last year the coroner investigated 22 confirmed cases where women lost their lives to domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely unacceptable.

Il s'agit là d'une situation tout à fait inacceptable. La violence faite aux femmes ne discrimine pas. Il n'existe pas de victime typique.

Woman abuse does not discriminate. There is no typical victim. It crosses every social boundary, society, class, race, ethnicity, age, ability and sexual orientation.

We know that every woman deserves to live her life free of fear and threat of violence, and every child deserves to grow up in a safe, loving home, free of fear of violence. That's why we've invested more than \$208 million every year in programs to protect women from violence and to provide support for victims.

Some of this money has gone towards training over 28,000 front-line workers in communities across Ontario to recognize the signs of domestic violence and support victims. We have also worked with our partners in the community on our domestic violence and sexual violence action plans. These are comprehensive plans that take practical steps to provide supports and resources to tackle these complex issues.

More than 200 communities have participated in our groundbreaking Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign since 2004. We've expanded this program into francophone, aboriginal and newcomer communities to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive training.

November 25 marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Le 25 novembre marque la Journée internationale pour l'élimination de la violence à l'égard des femmes. Demain, la campagne du ruban blanc commence aussi. Il s'agit de la plus grande campagne de sensibilisation du public au monde. Elle réunit des hommes et des femmes qui veulent mettre un terme à la violence faite aux femmes.

Tomorrow also begins the white ribbon campaign, the world's largest public education initiative to bring men and women to end violence against women. I am proud to say the white ribbon campaign started right here in Ontario and is now in over 60 countries worldwide. I want to thank all of my colleagues in the chamber today for wearing the white ribbon as a sign of their commitment to ending domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working to build strong, healthy communities. To stop domestic violence, we need to end the silence that allows the cycle of abuse to begin and to continue.

I want to thank everyone who works on the front lines and provides support and services across the province to

the survivors of violence. The work you do every day makes a real and concrete difference in the lives of women and their children.

Les femmes, où qu'elles vivent, ont le droit de vivre librement, sans craindre de devenir victimes de violence et d'agression. Les enfants ont le droit de vivre dans des foyers aimants, sans violence ou bouleversements, et les collectivités ont le droit de vivre en paix.

Women everywhere deserve to live lives free from violence and abuse. Children deserve loving homes, free from violence and turmoil. And communities deserve to live in peace. Women and men all across Ontario are united in saying, let's end domestic violence now.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to you.

I am honoured today to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to respond to the minister's statement on Woman Abuse Prevention Month. When African women's activist Ubah Hersi spoke at the Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge District Health Unit a couple of years ago, she said, "Whether it's in Mogadishu, Somalia ... or Lindsay, Ontario, violence against women is a serious and far-reaching issue."

Every second, a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence. Over 29% of Canadian women have been assaulted by a spouse, with 45% suffering serious physical injury.

Sexual assaults often occur from someone in a position of trust, such as a relative, coach, religious adviser, teacher or employer. Physical abuse carries on into old age, as we are all well aware from the recent news stories, particularly involving long-term-care facilities.

Unfortunately, violence is usually learned from male role models early in life.

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Abused women are three times more likely to have male partners who witnessed the abuse of their own mothers. Many prominent women who have experienced abuse are now discussing it as a means of raising awareness and providing role models for other women in similar circumstances.

Last spring, in the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I was happy to attend a presentation by Arlene Dickinson, the well-known Canadian entrepreneur and CEO; you all know her from Dragons' Den. She was at the Academy Theatre in Lindsay at a fundraiser for women's resources. During her presentation, Ms. Dickinson disclosed that she had been a victim of both emotional and physical abuse, and told the crowd that there was no shame in it. There was a point in her life when she knew she had to break free, and she faced many challenges before finding success.

Violence against women is a tragedy of our society. However, we need to treat the fundamental underlying causes of the disease and not just the symptoms. Keeping silent when we know or suspect abuse is happening to a

friend, a relative, a neighbour or an associate also makes us an accessory.

Domestic and sexual violence will not end until men become part of the solution. Men must take an active role in creating a culture that no longer tolerates violence and discrimination against women and girls.

Today there are more services and shelters available for women in these situations, but we need to raise awareness and foster education. It is a societal problem that is unacceptable in the 21st century.

I want to thank the women who have had the courage to leave those situations, the friends who helped them and the providers in our communities that got them to the next stage.

Mr. Speaker, I have been pleased and honoured today again to have the opportunity to speak to the Legislature on behalf of the PC caucus in support of the minister's statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and privilege always to stand as women's critic, on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to speak to this important initiative.

Many people here know that I used to be in active duty as a United Church minister full time. What they don't know is that in our church, a large portion of our church came from marginalized communities, many with mental health issues, many with addiction issues, many with prison records.

But I have to say that although hundreds would flock to our sanctuary from those communities, I never felt frightened once, except for one day. One day, on a Saturday afternoon, this young woman, well-heeled, well-educated, came running into the church, chased by her husband. There were programs going on—yoga programs, yoga classes—and children were in the building. She ran into my study. I locked the door. He chased her from room to room, upsetting the entire establishment. There was no time to call the police. Finally, luckily—and it was luck only, Mr. Speaker—when he left, I found her cowering in my office in terror. For a few minutes, I and we got a taste of what she lived with every day of her life.

I want to focus on two initiatives—two positive initiatives—that we all support here in the House. Number one is Ruth's Daughters, launched at Queen's Park two years ago on Mother's Day. Donna Cansfield and Christine Elliott came, along with faith leaders from across Ontario, and we all agreed on one thing: We wanted to see an end to domestic violence. And that happened in this very House.

I want to report, Mr. Speaker, that since that day, we've encouraged all faith traditions to focus one service a year on this issue, and it has happened. There have been two huge masses done by the Roman Catholic church, many services by other denominations and faiths, and many groups have started since then. We look forward to this Mother's Day to commemorate those events.

The second initiative, the White Ribbon Campaign, has already been mentioned. What wasn't mentioned is

that it was started by someone who now belongs to all Canadians—that's our own Jack Layton—and a couple of others who were at a kitchen table. They were men who said, in response to the member from the PC caucus, that men have to do something about this initiative. And now, as you heard, it's in 60 different countries.

Last Sunday in my church, Humbercrest United, the two initiatives met as we did a service for Ruth's Daughters, and the lead speaker was Todd Minerson, the executive director from the White Ribbon Campaign.

When we discussed the service and we set it up, we thought we would have a candle-lighting ceremony at the end of the service to commemorate women who had been lost to members of the community or known to be lost by members of the community, and we discussed how many candles to get. We didn't know if anybody would get up—we're United Church-ers; we're a little reticent—to light a candle, but we bought 25, thinking maybe about 25 people would come forward. Every single person from that congregation got up and walked to the front to light a candle in prayer and remembrance of some woman they knew who had been lost to domestic violence. That's how pervasive the problem is. We ran out of candles, but, Mr. Speaker, we never run out of hope.

I hope that those candles and the light from that service and the light that has been shed here today on this problem is carried forth by every member here into their communities; that they find out about Ruth's Daughters and the White Ribbon Campaign if they don't know much about them and that they carry that light forward so that, in the holiday season we all look forward to, we share with our families a season of peace, a season that is free from domestic violence, and a season, Mr. Speaker and members here, that is safe for all of our sisters.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Toby Barrett: Congratulations to you, Speaker, on your recent election.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

“Whereas there are over 300 homes in the area of the proposed UDI Port Ryerse Wind Farm;

“Whereas a precedent has been set by other counties in Ontario for bylaws of increased setbacks of 1,200 to 2,000 metres for the erection of wind turbines in populated areas;

“Whereas property values are decreased by proximity to wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate municipal powers to allow Norfolk county to reassess and increase setbacks to

2,000 metres in populated areas, to honour a moratorium on construction until these bylaw adjustments are met, and to reimburse lost property values in this affected community.”

I've been to the meetings. I support the petition.

LYME DISEASE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Mr. Steve Clark: Leeds–Grenville.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Don't worry, Speaker. You'll get it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm thinking “Senator.”

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks for the compliment.

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

1400

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” have been available “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access” to the people of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Daniel to bring it to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HOSPITALS

Mr. Rob Leone: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario require Premier McGuinty to table, by March 1, 2012, a specific and detailed plan that outlines the current stage of the development process, the timelines for proceeding to any subsequent stage, the deadlines for project completion, and how the government plans to pay for the construction and operation of all the hospital expansion projects promised before and during the 2011 Ontario general election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leone has moved private member’s notice of motion number 1. Pursuant to standing member 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion that I table today addresses the cynicism that currently plagues our democracy. With fewer than 50% of voters choosing to vote in this past election, it is incumbent upon this 40th Parliament to stem the tide of voter discontent.

As I was going from door to door in my riding, I frequently heard from people disappointed by the fact that politicians don’t keep their promises, that we are all the same and that nothing will ever change. Our chance for change is today, Mr. Speaker, by supporting this motion.

Ontarians are tired of governments that do not keep the promises they make, and we will hold them to account. That’s what the Constitution asks us to do and that’s why this House can send a very clear message to Ontarians through its very first private member’s ballot item, which I was fortunate enough to draw.

In my riding of Cambridge, there have been several announcements and groundbreaking ceremonies for Cambridge Memorial Hospital, but we are still without a hospital expansion on a project that was supposed to begin in 2005. In fact, right after the 2007 general election, the member for Kitchener Centre participated in a groundbreaking ceremony. At that time, the hospital was scheduled to be completed in 2010. Here we are at

the end of 2011 and there’s still no expansion for Cambridge Memorial Hospital. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but no cheque has been forthcoming. There are no cranes, dump trucks or other mighty machines, as my son likes to call them. The people in Cambridge and North Dumfries have been left out.

There’s a pattern with this government. Funding announcements keep happening mere weeks before an election—all in an attempt to save or gain seats for this government. They seem to like to dangle emotional infrastructure projects in front of voters, with the hope of better electoral results.

Cambridge is not unique, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in addition to the Cambridge announcement, between April and September 2011, the Ontario Liberal government held about two dozen other hospital expansion project announcements.

It’s time for Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal government to come clean and submit to the Legislature a detailed plan that outlines the costs, a timeline for completion and how the government plans to pay for the construction and operation of the following hospitals: Cambridge Memorial Hospital in the great riding of Cambridge; Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington; Brockville General Hospital; Groves Memorial Community Hospital; Hawkesbury and District General Hospital; South Bruce-Grey Health Centre in Kincardine—

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: I notice the member for Huron–Bruce applauding that, and she’s going to have a couple more items on this list—Providence Care in Kingston; Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga; Wingham and District Hospital in north Huron; the University of Ottawa Heart Institute; the Orléans Family Health Hub in Ottawa; St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital in St. Thomas; North York General Hospital in Toronto; Toronto East General Hospital, again in Toronto; West Park Healthcare Centre in Toronto; Toronto Grace Health Care Centre in Toronto; Etobicoke General Hospital, again in Toronto; York Central Hospital in Vaughan; North Wellington Health Care Corp. in north Wellington; Windsor Regional Hospital in Windsor; Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor; and Grey Bruce Health Services in Southampton.

All these hospital expansion projects were promised before or during the 2011 Ontario general election. There are likely more. They were made, in advance of an election, to help save or gain Liberal seats. The member for Huron–Bruce, for example, had three hospital expansion projects in her riding alone.

Funding for an expansion at Cambridge Memorial Hospital is just one example of Dalton McGuinty’s many broken promises, and it’s time for McGuinty to be held accountable for the promises that he has made in the recent provincial election.

Cambridge is not unique. As we can all see, Mr. Speaker, we have seen far too many instances with this Premier where he makes promises leading up to and

during a campaign and then backs away from them right after. Quite frankly, I remain sceptical and I don't believe the government will follow through with its commitments. Here are just a few reasons why.

First, the province's finances are in terrible shape. We're facing an unprecedented \$16-billion deficit. This is troubling because, rather than doing something about it, like accepting our amendment for a public sector wage freeze, they pat themselves on the back for increasing our deficit by \$2 billion this year.

What's worse is that this government has the habit of taking all the credit and none of the blame when it comes to everything they do. Just listen to all the excuses they listed in the throne speech and repeated in yesterday's economic update. They blamed everything and everyone except themselves for not having enough money to fund our priorities.

Ontarians rightly think this government will conveniently break their promises on hospital expansions because the blame lies somewhere else. In other words, they're setting themselves up to break promises with this blaming rhetoric.

Secondly, the Drummond commission is likely to ask for the Ontario government to curb increases in health spending. This is important to note because, assuming the government indeed has the money to construct these hospitals, with increases in health care funding being reduced, how will they actually operate the facilities they've created?

I have to thank the member for Barrie for highlighting this fact for me, where he and other members on this side of the House met with the hospital administrators in his riding and noted that there is serious concern about the operational costs not being forwarded for their newly built hospital. That's not forthcoming.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has a history of cancelling half-built infrastructure projects. If they can cancel a half-built power plant in Mississauga, what will stop them from cancelling hospital projects that don't even have a shovel in the ground?

In this motion I am simply asking the government to ensure that these expansion projects, projects which people care deeply about, are not going to be broken again. We're asking the government to tell us what taxes are going to go up and what spending cuts they're willing to make to ensure that Ontarians get the health care they both need and want.

Ontarians, especially residents of Cambridge and North Dumfries and users of Cambridge Memorial Hospital, have come to learn that there's a lot of uncertainty when this government announces funding. We have quickly learned that funding for hospital expansions, no matter how many times they are announced, are never concrete. This is why it is imperative that this motion pass this House. It is time that the Premier is held accountable by the House to ensure that he fulfills the promises he has made. This is why I'm asking my colleagues from all parties to join me in supporting this motion.

1410

It is clear that voters expect their politicians to keep their promises. What isn't clear is how the Premier plans to pay for these projects and how he's going to afford these promises. It's time for the Premier to come clean to Ontarians today and tell voters how he intends to keep his promises, or he must tell voters why he is voting against our hospitals, including Cambridge Memorial.

The government can try to push the blame onto the side of wanting more spending at a time when the province cannot afford it. However, I would just like to remind this House that it was this government that made these hospital expansion promises. All I'm looking for is a clear and detailed plan that outlines the costs, a timeline for completion and how the government plans to pay for the construction and operation of all the hospitals that I have previously mentioned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind members that we don't use the personal name of a member; it's "Premier" or "Minister" or the riding name, please. Thank you.

The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and I must say that you look extremely good sitting in that chair, although you don't seem to have the black robe. What happened there?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The tailor is away—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The tailor will be returning. Thank you, member.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I see. Now this is clear.

I would like to echo what has been said by the honourable member. The member for Cambridge asked something that is confronting each and every one of us right now: the frustration that we feel, on this side of the House, anyway, and the frustrations that come when government breaks its promises, when government plays political games on the backs of hopeful communities and citizens of Ontario.

The motion in front of us today asks us to take a moment and consider—really it asks us to add up the many promises that the Liberals made while they were on the campaign trail. While they were hoping for votes, what did they promise? Once you go past the photo ops and the quick campaign stops, the communities are still hoping that those announcements you made in their cities—you know those great big cheques that people hold? They remember those cheques and the amount of money that is written on those great big cheques, and they expect the money to come.

The member from Cambridge wants you to add this up. Bring all those extra-large-size cheques you photocopied with through the campaign and add them up. This is what he's asking you to do. I don't think this is something that difficult to do, and I think this is something that is worthwhile.

There is reason for concern. The Liberal government has been in power for the last eight years. It's not like

they have always delivered on the health care promises they made, and the member from Cambridge is a living example of a promise that was made to him—to his community—that has yet to come true.

Well, we did add up the numbers on those great big plastic cheques that were photo-opped through the campaign—the ones that I and Miriam, our very capable researcher, were able to track down, anyway.

Of course, there's Cambridge Memorial Hospital, their main capital redevelopment project in Cambridge: The big cheque said \$200 million.

Then there's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital phase 1 redevelopment in Burlington: the big cheque on that one, \$312 million. You all have your BlackBerrys—the part that allows you to add and subtract, the little built-in calculator? You will need a calculator by the time I am done reading these numbers.

There is Brockville General Hospital: the mental health, the complex continuing care unit, as well as the rehab. The big cheque on that one: \$100 million.

Then there's Groves Memorial Community Hospital. That's a replacement hospital in Greenfield. The big cheque for that one: \$136 million.

Then there's L'Hôpital Général de Hawkesbury et District, the hospital redevelopment: \$98 million.

The South Bruce Grey Health Centre—that's their phase 1 emergency department and ambulatory care area in Kincardine. The great big cheque in that one read "\$100 million."

We have Providence Care, the King Street West site redevelopment; that's the one in Kingston. That was a big, big, plastic cheque; "\$350 million" was printed on that one.

Halton Healthcare Services: That's the Milton redevelopment in the town of Milton. We don't have a number on that one, but it talks about a major redevelopment.

Credit Valley Hospital: That's a priority area redevelopment, the expansion in Mississauga. This one also has been promised; numbers to come.

Wingham and District Hospital, the phase 1 redevelopment in north Huron—I didn't pronounce that properly. We have numbers yet to come in the millions of dollars.

Let's go back to the University of Ottawa Heart Institute that my colleagues talked about. Cardiac life support services in Ottawa: The big cheque on that one reads "\$200 million."

The Orleans Family Health Hub in Ottawa: The big cheque was \$60 million.

The Renfrew Victoria Hospital—that's the Renfrew regional dialysis program, a very needed program—is \$12 million.

The St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital redevelopment in St. Thomas—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Hear, hear.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. The big cheque in your community read "\$106 million."

Then there's North York General Hospital. That's the inpatient beds, and that's the one in Toronto. The cheque read "\$15 million."

The Toronto East General Hospital—that's the phase 1 redevelopment—also in Toronto: \$210 million.

You also made announcements on the election trail about West Park Healthcare Centre, the phase 1 redevelopment—no figures were given, but the people are led to believe that millions of dollars are coming their way. You said it during the election.

You did the same thing at Toronto Grace Health Centre. You promised a major redevelopment. People are hoping for millions of dollars.

In Etobicoke's general hospital, the phase 1 redevelopment, you had a big cheque there; "\$200 million" was written on it.

At York Central Hospital, a new hospital in Vaughan, we haven't got the figures, but a promise was made, a promise for a brand new hospital. You can add a lot of zeroes to that.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And add HST to that, my colleague says.

North Wellington Health Care Corp.—the Louise Marshall Hospital, to be precise: Their emergency and ambulatory care projects in north Wellington—those promises were made on the election trail.

Windsor Regional Hospital, the bridging project in Windsor: The big cheque on that one read "\$60 million."

Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital—that's for their angioplasty services and ambulatory care expansion in Windsor. The big cheque read "\$80 million."

The Grey Bruce health centre, Southampton site, the emergency department and the laboratory expansion: \$10 million.

The list goes on and on, but I think you get the drift of where I'm going.

So you have people throughout this province who have seen the Liberal government come into their town, either bearing a big cheque or a promise of major capital redevelopment of their health care services in their own community, their own city, and they're expecting you to deliver on it.

What the motion is asking is, did you do the math? Will you do the math? Will you submit to us how much your promises have cost? The people of Ontario deserve nothing less. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It's good to see you in the chair. I'm noticing that you're quieter when you're in the chair than when you're seated elsewhere, sir. But we're very pleased that you're in the chair.

1420

I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the motion from the member for Cambridge.

I would actually like to thank both the member from Cambridge and the member from Nickel Belt for going through those catalogues of projects that we are looking

forward to accomplishing. What it brings up is that, in fact, our government did introduce something called the ReNew Ontario plan where we take an actual planned approach to infrastructure, when we actually have a long-term plan for infrastructure investments, not just in health care—although obviously health care is a major part of that—but in other areas as well.

As you have noted, we actually do have plans, real plans, to build 18 new hospitals, and then renovating and major projects at 100 other hospitals. You've mentioned some of the hospitals that I take an interest in: Cambridge Memorial—for those of you who don't come from my particular part of the province, Cambridge is just southwest of Guelph; Groves Memorial, which is in Fergus, just north of Guelph; the hospital in Vaughan—all my ancestors were born in Vaughan so I always take an interest in Vaughan. The list goes on and on. Milton is another neighbour where there's a hospital project committed.

The point here is that we have taken the time to create long-term infrastructure plans, and what we have announced is not just some sort of random sprinkling of largesse but it's as a result of capital submissions to the Ministry of Health, it's as a result of serious preliminary planning that has gone on on all of these projects and it is part of a plan.

In terms of the actual details, the actual content of the motion, the request has been made for information. In fact, all the information about commitment to hospital infrastructure is already online as part of our publicly available long-term infrastructure plan, Building Together. The fact that the member from Nickel Belt was able to find out so much information about the projected costs of the various projects tells you that what I am saying is actually accurate: that the costings are all there, that the costings are all part of the plan that we have laid out and that we know what it adds up to.

When we released the Building Together plan in the spring, we committed to spend \$35 billion on infrastructure over the next three years and to provide some clarity, predictability and accountability to Ontario voters to know what it was that we were committing to. But the thing that's important to note is that that commitment wasn't just something that was on some random plastic cheque at an event; that's something that's in our actual fiscal plan. That infrastructure plan is part of the Ontario budget, part of the fiscal plan of the province of Ontario. Those are projects that we have accounted for, not just in our platform but in the public accounts of the province of Ontario. That's why the information is all there on the Infrastructure Ontario website, because it's part of a plan that has been filed with the government and with the Auditor General, where it isn't just, as I say, random announcements.

When I look at what has happened sometimes with the other parties, it's interesting that there haven't been formal plans like that. Perhaps the cynicism that we're hearing about from parties opposite is based on the way they used to do things. They would run around and make

campaign commitments and not necessarily put those things in. Just in Cambridge—because it's the member from Cambridge who brought the motion—if you look at the history of this project, in 1998 the Conservatives' Health Services Restructuring Commission ordered that this hospital needed to be built. In 2001, the Conservatives said, "Oh, yeah, we're going to build it." In 2003, it was part of the Conservative election campaign. But guess what? The money wasn't in the costing of their platform. So when we arrived and actually looked at the books and the auditor said, "Hey, what, \$5.6 billion"—the money was not in the fiscal plan left behind by the Conservatives. The money for the Cambridge hospital is now in the fiscal plan of the province of Ontario.

But do you know what happened? Do you know what happened, new member from Cambridge, when that fiscal plan, as part of the Ontario budget, came to the floor of this House? Your party voted against the money for the hospital in your riding and for the hospital in Mr. Arnott's riding, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

I have to tell you that I want to congratulate the member from Wellington-Halton Hills on the advocacy work that he has done for his hospital over the years. He has been a tremendous advocate for his hospital. He's in my face; he's in the Minister of Health's face; he's in the face of anybody who will listen to him. I mention this because this is in marked contrast to what I experienced from another neighbouring community, where I didn't hear the amount that I heard from the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, who never let me forget that we needed a new hospital in Fergus. I actually happen to agree with him, and I agree that we need a new hospital in Cambridge.

But the message here is that you can't have it both ways, folks. You cannot say, "Let's cancel the HST," and say, "But leave all those hospitals in the fiscal plan." You can't have it both ways. Sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate today. I'd certainly like to thank and congratulate the newly elected member from Cambridge for bringing this very important resolution forward. I commend him for taking immediate action to protect not only the interests of his constituents but the interests of people throughout the province of Ontario.

The member's resolution calls on the government to provide this House and the people of Ontario with "a specific and detailed plan that outlines the current stage of the development process, the timelines for proceeding to any subsequent stage, the deadlines for project completion, and how the government plans to pay for the construction and operation of all the hospital expansion projects promised before and during the 2011 Ontario general election." It requires the government to do something that they have not done ever before, and that is to provide this House with a reasonable time frame of

four months to prepare for the tabling of the plans and the promises they have made. It's time to allow, to the residents of these communities, answers to the question as to how and when these hospitals are going to be built, extended, and how they are going to be paid for.

This resolution is a positive step in the right direction in that it proposes to keep politicians—and this Liberal government, in particular—honest and accountable to the people in the province of Ontario. That's what it needs to do.

In Ontario today, we have a government that, regrettably, has a great proclivity towards making grand announcements with very impressive speeches and photo ops; everybody is invited. We saw this happen 22 separate times prior to the 2011 election campaign, when all of these little promises were made about expansions and the health minister herself went out on a little bit of a whistle-stop tour of Ontario, travelling the province, announcing new hospitals—some of which had been announced several times before—and new expansions, but without giving people any information about the costs, the funding or the timelines. Essentially, they said, “We'll build a hospital. Trust us.” The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that you can't trust them. They have broken their promise on too many occasions. Just ask the people of Cambridge. We have had three groundbreakings for that project, and they have broken their word.

1430

In fact, I've got an article with me today from Cambridge Now that was written on October 29, 2007, and the headline reads, “Let the Digging Begin at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. There was Singing and Dancing at CMH Groundbreaking.” The article goes on to state, “Cambridge Memorial Hospital will soon be the site of a major operation as it begins construction on a \$39.1-million expansion ... that by 2010”—when it's completed—“will house the newest in medical technology.”

The article appeared in 2007. I was there at that groundbreaking, and as the people in Cambridge and Waterloo region know, work has yet to begin on that expansion.

So this resolution that my colleague has put forward is absolutely necessary in order that the people in this province can hold the government of the day, the McGuinty government, accountable for all these pre-election announcements in the whistle-stop tour made by the Minister of Health. They need to know what's going to happen, when it's going to happen and who's going to pay for it. Whether it is the capital funds that are going to be required or the operating funds, they are entitled to know.

Again, I want to commend and I want to thank my colleague from Cambridge. He has done a lot of hard work on this issue, and I hope that everybody will support him and hold the McGuinty government accountable for the promises they made prior to the 2011 election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice to this debate. In my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton, particularly in Brampton, the Liberal government has made a number of promises, and I echo the sentiments of my colleague the member from Cambridge when he states that people in Ontario have lost their trust in the government, they have lost their trust in politicians, and it is incumbent on us as politicians to restore this trust in this government, to restore their trust in politicians, and for that reason, we must demand transparency and draw attention to the fact that this government has broken promise after promise.

In Peel Memorial Hospital in Brampton, the first promise the Liberal government made was that they would not close this hospital. It was then closed. After the hospital was closed, the second promise was that this hospital would be reopened. This hospital was not reopened. And the final promise, on the eve of the election, was that this hospital would be demolished and rebuilt.

Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable to break promises to the people of Ontario, and that's why I stand in solidarity with my colleague the member for Cambridge to demand that the government be accountable, be transparent and give us the true facts and figures with respect to the promises made to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate, and I welcome the new member from Cambridge.

I think all members will know that private members' time is something that we get a little share of, and we use it wisely and try to use it in the best interests of our community when the opportunity arises to speak to the House, and I understand that that would be the member's intent here.

What I don't understand, to be perfectly frank, is that this information is available to any member of the House right now simply by going on the website. Any member of the House who wanted to have the information that is called for in the motion could go and get it, probably within the next 20 minutes. So while I think it's a great initiative for the member to put forward his desire to see this project undertaken—I certainly don't fault him for doing that; that's his job—I question the use of his very valuable private member's time to do that, because your next opportunity won't come up for some time down the road.

I can tell you the experience I've had in my own community of Oakville. We've got a project, one of the largest infrastructure projects in Ontario's history, under way in the form of a new hospital. It's being built; the tractors are moving.

We also have some other projects around the region of Halton that have been outstanding through successive governments going back quite some time, and it's our government that stepped forward with a plan to address that. You can go and look at that plan. Any one of us can go and see the outline, see the time, see the costing that's associated with each one of the plans.

We've committed to, as I understand it, amongst others, Cambridge Memorial, Vaughan, the Milton project—which I talked about—another one in Halton which is part of Halton Health care, Groves Memorial, Brockville General and Renfrew Victoria. They're all projects that we're investing in. The idea, obviously, is to improve health care in the province of Ontario, but we're the first government that has stepped forward with a plan to do that.

In 2003, when I became MPP for my community in Oakville, a lot of people had talked about the Oakville hospital. A lot of people had talked about the need for the Oakville hospital. Nobody had actually put a plan in place that addressed the building of the Oakville hospital. We were able to do that, and I'm happy to stand up and say today that that project is now under way and is being built.

We also approved Joe Brant, which is in a neighbouring community. The MPP from Burlington will know that that has been a project that, certainly—about 7% or 8% of people in Oakville actually use Joe Brant hospital, so I've taken an interest in that project. I've been invited by the people at Joe Brant to go and visit and to understand the needs and have gone out and advocated, along with the member—Minister McMeekin and I have certainly advocated. Even though it's not part of my own riding, we've gone down and advocated for that project to move ahead because we know how important it is to the people in Burlington.

If you look back, I think, over a series of governments and you look for the government that has done the most to renew the infrastructure in health care that needs to be done, I don't think there's anyone that holds a candle to the record of this government. We're building 18 new hospitals; we're renovating and improving over 100 others. Every project so far has come in on time and on budget.

There's no reason to believe that the information that's currently contained in the Infrastructure Ontario website is not accurate. I know, as the MPP for that area, that I had to advocate: I had to bang on a lot of doors, and I had to speak to a lot of ministers. Sometimes I felt the project was moving off track. It took a lot of work to bring it back on track.

I've seen members of the opposition who have done that hard work and legwork as well. I suspect that the member from Cambridge will probably have to do that as well, as will anybody else who has a project like this in their community. That's just part of being a good MPP and dealing with the political system that we have here.

These are all projects that we're investing in. When I look at the record of the party of the member opposite, though—I understand that when asked by the Hamilton Spectator, the leader of that party said that there was no guarantee that Joe Brant would be completed under that government.

That's not the way to address it. If the member wants to go back to the old way of doing things, that's how it

should be done. In this case, it's there in black and white for you to look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your re-election to this House and the fact that you are serving this House as a presiding officer. With Hamilton in charge of this House, we can't go wrong.

The member for Cambridge has moved that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly require Premier McGuinty to table, by March 1, 2012, a specific and detailed plan that outlines the current stage of the development process, the timelines for proceeding to any subsequent stage, the deadlines for project completion and how the government plans to pay for the construction and operation of the hospital expansion promised before and during the 2011 Ontario general election.

What a sensible suggestion. I want to indicate at the outset that I'll be supporting the motion put forward today by the member for Cambridge. He deserves credit for seeking to shed some light on the government's approval process for hospital capital projects.

In the last Parliament, I tried my best to do the same. I asked for the hospital list by way of an order paper question. They refused to give it to me. I had to resort to a freedom-of-information request to obtain the list of proposed hospital capital projects in the province. But for some reason the government was initially unwilling to let us have the list.

1440

Why would the list of hospital projects be a secret, and what have they got to hide? You would think that the people of Ontario could be entrusted with the knowledge of where there are proposals for new hospital construction. But under the McGuinty Liberals, this apparently is not the case. My staff and I had to go through all kinds of hoops, including appeals, and in the end the information I received was incomplete. So, good for the member from Cambridge for so capably bringing this up again in the House.

My staff and I worked for eight years to help obtain approval for a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington, and again for 14 months to gain financial support for the Georgetown hospital's emergency room and CT scanner project.

I will hold the government to the commitments it made to my constituents in August of this year. In fact, doing all I can to hold the government's feet to the fire on their promises to support our hospital projects is one of my highest priorities in this 40th provincial Parliament. What could be more important?

The people of Wellington–Halton Hills deserve accessible public health care when they need it, of the highest quality possible as close to home as possible—period. Privileged to be their voice in this House, I will accept nothing less. I'm glad to also express support for the new Cambridge Memorial Hospital, which serves many of my constituents in the township of Puslinch.

I urge all members to support this resolution and send a strong signal that hospital project approvals should be determined on need, not on politics.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

The member from Cambridge has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to thank all members who participated in the debate. I think there were very interesting positions taken by the government and certainly by the opposition side. But through you to the member for Oakville, Mr. Speaker, I will never be ashamed for using my private member's time to advocate for Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

Frankly, unless the plan demonstrates what the cost is, what the design of the hospital will be, when the cheque will arrive, when the machines will arrive, when the project will be complete and how we will fund the operation of that hospital, there is no plan.

I went on that government infrastructure plan. They list it on a nice website. There are no timelines for completion; there are sporadic costs associated with it. There's no plan. That's why we're tabling this motion today. I'm proud to stand up for Cambridge Memorial Hospital and all the hospitals across the province of Ontario.

YORK REGION TRANSIT LABOUR
DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT
DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL
AU SEIN DES SERVICES DE TRANSPORT
EN COMMUN DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

Mr. Shurman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving companies that provide public transit services to The Regional Municipality of York / Projet de loi 7, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail au sein des entreprises qui fournissent des services de transport en commun dans la municipalité régionale de York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. Let me add my voice to the one that has already said congratulations on seeing you sitting in the chair. It does my heart good. I know you're a fair man.

Let's move ahead with Bill 7. This is a bill that I don't want to describe as last-minute, but with thanks to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, we swapped ballot items and got it moved forward because I thought this was an urgent piece of business to bring before the House.

This bill is basically about putting public transit back in motion, putting buses on the street in the regional municipality of York; it has no other agenda. I do not consider it a partisan bill. This bill is entirely citizen-driven. One only has to look at my email queue or my in-basket to find that out, and I think that is true of all the people who represent ridings in York region.

I'm using this private member's legislation to do what the government and the unions and the companies involved appear unwilling to do, and that is to help the people of York region. And they need help. They need to get to work. They need to get their kids to school. They need to get to their appointments. In short, they need to live their lives, because transit, in any municipality as densely populated as York region but as far-flung as York region, requires that kind of service.

The goals of the bill, as stated in the bill, are to get transit working for York region residents again, to designate York Region Transit as an essential service, to prevent future disruptions in transit from causing personal and economic hardship, and also to secure a fair agreement for all parties involved in the dispute, including the transit users and the taxpayers of York region.

Let me focus for a moment on those very people, because in any labour dispute, as this House well knows and I think as most people know, there's always collateral fallout, and it's always the largest portion and the most unrepresented or underrepresented portion of the population that bears the brunt of a strike. In this particular case, as it is in most cases, it's the public who use the service.

Let me hold out an olive branch here by way of compromise right at the outset and say that I am well aware that everyone in this House wants a resolution to a strike that is now five weeks old. To that end, it strikes me that the element that we've included in this bill that speaks to declaring transit in York region an essential service is a stumbling block for people sitting and listening to this debate today.

That olive branch will take the following form: If this bill passes second reading today and goes to committee, I would be happy to accept an amendment that strikes the element of essential service from this bill. Why? Because, as I said at the beginning, this is about putting buses back on the street in York region and not making some kind of political statement. Be it as it may, the fact that I happen to support transit being declared an essential service—I'll take that out. That's the first compromise that I want to put on the table.

Let me recount some facts for this House and for people who are watching today. The strike started on October 24, 2011, so we're in the fifth week of a service disruption in York region. Let me also point out that we are eight days away from rising for the winter recess in this House, because we got a late start after an election. That means that if we don't get involved in this House in a resolution to this transit dispute and leave it to the parties to get back to the table and do something, which they haven't—there's been an abject absence for the past

five weeks of any negotiation—then, save and except for a return to this House on an emergency basis, we're not going to debate any back-to-work legislation affecting the strike until some time at the end of February, beginning of March at the earliest. It's going to be a long cold winter, as it always is in this area. We simply cannot allow this strike to go on any longer.

I might point out, Speaker, that I'm not the only person who's party to the strike on behalf of my constituents who thinks so. The union itself has said, "You know, if there were an arbitration, we would go back and get to work right away."

There have been no meaningful negotiations. In fact, there had been no picketing until recently. I might congratulate my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora, who said in public that there's so little in action on this strike that there's no picketing. I suppose in deference to that, there was a demonstration and a picket of the Finch subway station earlier today by about 200 strikers.

Students are missing classes. Parents are missing work. Jobs are being lost. Small business is suffering. In short, the residents of York region cannot afford to have this strike continue. We have been diligent—and when I say "we," I'm talking about my colleagues from York region on this side of the House: myself, the member from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from York–Simcoe—in following a process that was driven by our citizen concerns. That process was begun about four weeks ago, a week or 10 days into the strike, when we made a public statement requesting that cooler heads prevail and that the parties get back to the table and negotiate in earnest. As a matter of fact, I might say, by way of a tip of the hat to the new labour minister, that seemed to be in line with what the government side was calling for.

1450

We let it go for a couple of weeks. So now we're approximately three weeks into a strike, at which point my colleagues and I called for government legislation that would bring the sides to the table and mandatory arbitration or compulsory arbitration that would result in the settlement of the strike.

So we had previously called on all parties, we had previously called upon the government and we are where we are: We're five weeks into a strike; there is nobody talking, under any circumstances; and there are no buses moving in York region except for in a couple of spots, and I will explain why in a few moments.

To date, the McGuinty government has not taken any action to end the strike, and I might say that the Liberal MPPs from York region have been silent on this issue. Those are the MPPs from Richmond Hill, from Vaughan—where I might point out that there is a lesser disruption of service—in Oak Ridges–Markham and in Markham–Unionville—

Interjection: Well, it's not true that we've been silent, Peter, and you know it.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You know you can come back and talk when your turn to speak comes around.

Why are these members not speaking up for their constituents?

Interjection: It's all political, isn't it?

Mr. Peter Shurman: They'll have their chance.

Why are they not speaking up for their constituents? It's not just my job to speak for the residents of Thornhill and the residents of south York region; it is the job of all seven of us to speak on behalf of our constituents. I'm not the only one that has an email queue and an inbox that says that they want action.

The lack of action on the part of the McGuinty government is victimizing York region residents. They're being victimized unduly; they're being victimized unfairly; they're being victimized unequally. So we invite our colleagues to join with us, and I have placed on the table a compromise that we would be happy to bring to the table in the event that they want to support second reading of this bill.

As for the essential service piece: While I've said that I would recant on that, move back and move away from that, it's worth pointing out that we spent some time in this House, not a year ago, debating and passing—and that was the government and the Progressive Conservative opposition—Bill 150. And Bill 150 declared that the TTC was an essential service at the request of the city of Toronto. Nobody seemed to have a problem with that. So, here we are in York region with a strike that is five weeks old, and somehow or other York region and the city of Toronto are not equivalent. What makes the people of York region exist on a lesser scale than the people here in Toronto?

I will point out as well that if you go back four years, we had a one-day strike of the TTC. They walked out for one day, disrupted a Friday evening in Toronto, and within 48 hours there was back-to-work legislation and an emergency session, on the weekend, of this Parliament to bring that to a close. So there is some kind of an inequity here between the city of Toronto and other parts, apparently.

York region is, as I mentioned, a far-flung region. It's a wide region: It goes from Georgina on the east all the way to Highway 400 to the west, Steeles on the south to Lake Simcoe on the north, and you have to get around in that. In that region, what we've got is a convoluted transit situation where there are five contracts in existence and there are three companies represented. Right now there are three locals on strike. There is no direct relationship with the region because these are private corporate suppliers.

The region's responsibility is to provide transit. I am not sitting in judgment on how they've chosen to do that, but they have chosen to do that by delegating the contract to provide that transit to private concerns. The region, at this point, is not stepping up and taking responsibility, because we're five weeks in and we see no talks. We must prevent this from happening again. At the very least, we must prevent it from going any further.

I want to repeat that this House has eight more sitting days—eight more sitting days. So on that basis, it is

incumbent upon us in this House to act now, because if we don't we are committing the people of York region not to five weeks but, more than likely, five months, and who knows what will happen to transit in that area?

I've pointed out that Liberals are particularly interested in Toronto. The Liberals voted for Bill 150. They put Bill 150 before us less than a year ago and they put emergency legislation before us four years ago, both of those issues pertaining to the TTC. What's wrong with York region? York region people want to know. York region is not a second-class citizen and, to boot, York region consists not only of Newmarket–Aurora, Thornhill and York–Simcoe; it consists as well of Richmond Hill, Oak Ridges–Markham, Markham–Unionville and Vaughan. So I want the members of those particular constituencies to stand up as well.

There are no options for people in York region. A cab ride to York University from Thornhill is 30 or 40 bucks each way. In Toronto you can get away with it; here, you can't. So I call upon all members of this House to understand what it is that we want. What we want is buses back on the streets of York region, and we want them there now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to congratulate you for being chosen to be in the chair. I think we will all be very happy with the selections that have been made for this particular Parliament.

I want to say, first of all, that I think there was an opportunity here to do something right. I'll agree with the member who just spoke. But I think what the member should have done is brought in a bill that deals with arbitration and back-to-work. I think if the member had done that, we probably would be in a position to be able to support that bill.

I know I've met with some of the membership and with the leadership of both locals 1587 and 113—and I notice that Mr. Doyle is here and also, I think, Mr. Kinnear, but the other Mr. Kinnear, right? Ha, I got it right. So I'm saying this in their presence: that we've had the discussion. Essentially, the union is saying, "Listen, we want to put an end to this strike. We want to find a way to negotiate and to settle the agreement." Unfortunately, it's a bit of a one-way street right now. The union is willing to try to find a solution, and it would appear that the employers are dragging their feet, for whatever reasons. I'm not going to cast aspersion, but just say that as a fact.

So there is an option that is open, and that option, I think the fair one, would have been to say that we need to have binding arbitration of some type in order to be able to get the parties to go before an arbitrator in order to settle this at the arbitration table. Will the union be totally happy with what an arbitrator has to say? No. Will the employer be completely happy with what the arbitrator has to say? No. But that's what arbitration is all about. It's about saying, "What's your position? What's your

position?" and the arbitrator going away and saying, "Okay, I'm going to look at this from both perspectives, and I'm going to find a saw-off somewhere in the middle." That's what arbitration is all about.

I find myself in a bit of an odd spot because I support part of what the member is trying to do. I'll be blunt. I'm agreeing with a Conservative here. You don't see me do that very often.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll tell you—no, I run against Conservatives where I come from. It's a whole different story where I come from. But the point is this—and I'm known as a pretty reasonable guy. The point is that the member brings forward—

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They're saying I'm a reasonable guy, and they're applauding? I'm in trouble.

I would just say that the member brings part of the bill—essentially there are three parts of it; one is that it's back-to-work legislation, which in itself is problematic for me. But there is arbitration. That I can support. I'm sure that if I sat down with ATU—and we've had this discussion. If the bill was strictly back to work for binding arbitration, I think my colleagues—I don't want to speak for them—more than likely would say, "Yeah, you know, that's not a bad idea. That's a way of moving things forward." We'd always rather they negotiate at the table. That's always the default. But where that can't happen—and it happens, at times—we have arbitration.

The poison pill in this thing is the essential services. I cannot, as a New Democrat, accept essential services when it comes to transit. I understand that sometimes this Legislature will have to make decisions about how to resolve strikes if they become deadlocked, but there's a way of doing that that I think, at the end of the day, finds a saw-off, and I don't think that this particular way we're coming at it, with essential services legislation, in fact imposing essential services on York region—I don't think it's right. I think that's not the way to go.

I would suggest to my friends that there are more private members' bills that are going to be able to be brought to this Legislature. If the Conservative Party wants to bring one forward—and I'm not saying that I agree entirely. We would have to see what it is, we would have to have a discussion, our leadership would have to sit down and look at that, and we'd have to talk to some people. But if you're talking about arbitration, well, we're in the ballpark. We can talk about that. But I will not stand in this House and vote in favour of essential services legislation. I just can't do that. It's against all of my principles.

I come out of the Steelworkers. I've negotiated collective agreement after collective agreement for the Steelworkers. I was a staff member of the Ontario Federation of Labour. As a person who comes out of the labour movement, has worked for the labour movement and has been part of it all of my life, I cannot go down that road at this point. I just think it would be a little bit too much for me to do. I understand we walk a fine line

in this Legislature as legislators and sometimes we have to do things that we don't like doing because it's the right thing to do. But I would just suggest to the member that if he had amended his bill right from the beginning and said, "We will have arbitration," you would have had a better chance for us to do it.

1500

The problem we now have is if we say, "Oh, yeah, we'll support you," nod, nod, wink, wink, and all of a sudden we vote for what is essentially an essential services bill, and the member or the government doesn't agree to an amendment, then where am I? I've essentially supported back-to-work legislation that has essential services.

I just say to the member: I know you're trying to do the right thing. You're an honourable member, sir; I say that with all sincerity. You're trying to do what's right for your community. I get it. You're trying to move this thing forward, but this is a method that I cannot support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and it really is a pleasure to see you in that seat. I have observed you over the last few days since we returned here, and it appears we have a mellower Miller in the House.

Now, to address the very real concerns expressed in what we see as Bill 7 before us, brought by the member from Thornhill: I always like to be as positive as I can, and I will certainly say that I share your concerns about the difficulties that our constituents, in fact, are facing, given the transit disruption in York region. My constituency office has been in receipt of a number of phone calls. The particular hardships of students and seniors are certainly there; we hear about them.

But we have been able to explain to our constituents exactly the process that is being undergone here. We on this side of the House—in this party—clearly believe in collective bargaining and negotiations in good faith as being the best way of settling this type of situation.

My office has been in regular communication with the regional chairman, and that individual, of course, has reported to regional council on the situation and the progress of negotiations. We have no request from regional council to go any further at this point. They are very pleased with the fact that our Minister of Labour has appointed a provincial mediator. I understand there's even a federal mediator involved in the situation. This is a crucial difference that we face between our situation in York region and the situation in Toronto.

I not only respect my constituents, but I respect the duly elected members of regional council. They have not requested that our government move forward. They have not made the type of deputations that the city of Toronto did in the disruption of services from the TTC. The situation, according to the regional chairman—and I have a letter he sent out, actually, at 2:44 today—

Mr. Jeff Leal: At 2:44?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: At 2:44, just some 20 minutes ago. His position is, and I quote directly from his letter, "The transit providers have substantial offers on the table that include increases in salary, sick days and benefits; however, the unions have refused to consider them.

"The union leadership has ignored offers by the transit contractors, asking instead for arbitration. The contractors and the government of Ontario have both rejected calls for arbitration and the region is not in a position to force this option on any of the parties involved."

I think that the regional chairman has made it very clear he does not consider the situation as at an impasse. He wants both sides to get back to the table.

I'd also like to make a few comments in terms of the solution proposed here. It may seem like a very superficially attractive proposition. I would suggest that it's a really quite simplistic response to a very complex issue.

It's very much what we saw in the election only less than two months ago from the PC Party. It's very easy to call for a simplistic measure like tax cuts when you don't consider where the service cuts are going to come from. We know that the people of Ontario rejected, on October 6, those politics of division. This is precisely where negotiation and a nuanced response are what is required. And I would suggest to you that regional council is also the representative of our constituents, and they have not requested that our government take any further action in this regard at this point in time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, this message that we've just heard from the member from Oak Ridges–Markham is the reason that some 40,000 victims of this strike are today suffering hardship—financial hardship, personal hardship. Seniors can't get to medical appointments. People with disabilities can't get from their home to their place of work. And we hear from this member that the reason that she and the government are refusing to act here today on this legislation that could end this strike is because she hasn't heard from the regional government, that they have not requested this. The reason that we are here and that the member from Thornhill has tabled this legislation is precisely because no one else is taking any action.

I stand here with my colleagues and I say to the regional government of York region: You have failed the people who elected you. I stand here and I say that whether it is the union, who at least is saying, "Bring in an arbitrator so that we can resolve this"—we now have a Liberal government here, probably all four members who are representing people in York region, who are saying, along with the regional government, "We will wash our hands as well." Shame on the people who are hearing on a day-to-day basis from the people who are suffering.

To the member from Oak Ridges–Markham: Here is an email, which is among many, that I received as a copy. I read for the record, and I'm happy to deliver it over: "My local MPP Helena Jaczek has not taken

trouble to return my many calls made to her office. Kindly table a bill to back to” work “legislation and make YRT an essential service.”

Speaker, we can speak nicely here about how we want to follow process. We are elected, all of us here, to represent the people in our ridings who look to us for leadership. I am not going to wait for the regional chair—who, by the way, was never elected by anyone; he was appointed by some regional councillors, and that’s another issue. If anything, what I’ve heard here and the lack of initiative on the part of our regional chair motivate me to bring forth another private member’s bill that calls on the regional chair to be elected so that the regional chair can in fact be accountable to the people who elected him.

I believe that we have a responsibility in this House to ensure that the regional public transit system works for the people who pay for it, the people whose tax dollars pay for it, who you, member from Oak Ridges–Markham, represent—and the member from Richmond Hill and the member from Vaughan. I have some emails relating to the member from Vaughan, too, but I won’t read them.

If we cannot come together here in this Legislature and do the right thing—as the member from Thornhill has so rightly said, it took us less than 48 hours to bring back-to-work legislation in for the city of Toronto and the TTC. And yes, there was leadership from the city of Toronto, but the fact that there isn’t from the region of York doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t be doing our job. That’s why we’re here with this legislation today.

I say to the government: I read in the throne speech the importance of an integrated transit system throughout the greater Toronto area. I suggest it begs the credibility if on the one hand we call for an integrated, seamless transit system throughout the GTA and yet have it fragmented because of fragmented labour legislation that relates to it.

1510

I will not shrink from the fact that I believe that transit should, in fact, be an essential service; that no one who relies on public transit should be held hostage through and as a result of a labour negotiation. I, too, believe in collective bargaining, but collective bargaining—ask the gentlemen here who are on the union side—is not working, and that’s why we’re here.

We’re saying, “Bring in the arbitrator,” and that’s exactly what this bill does. It brings in an arbitrator. It sets down some conditions and some guidelines for that arbitration, such as the ability to pay; such as the fiscal condition of York region and the province. But what it does is it ensures that the people who need transit have it while the negotiation is taking place with the assistance of an arbitrator.

And so, here we are. We have four Liberal MPPs who refused to sign a letter that we sent to the Minister of Labour on November 10, simply asking the minister to bring in legislation so that this matter could be resolved. The spaces are blank, and I suggest, from what I’m hearing, that when we vote this afternoon on this bill they

will be blank one more time. They won’t vote for this. But they will have to answer to their constituents, to the people in their ridings—

Mr. Greg Sorbara: We’re going to miss you, Frank. We’re going to miss you.

Mr. Frank Klees: You’re going to miss me?

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Yeah, we’re going to miss you when you’re gone.

Mr. Frank Klees: I defer to the member—you see, for those who are watching this and who can’t hear, the member from Vaughan is suggesting that I will be gone. Well, I suggest that if I am gone, I will at least have done my job here today in standing up for my constituents.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): May I suggest that we don’t get personal and that we stick to the issue, please. And no personal comments. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: I’m done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, it truly is an honour and a privilege to rise here today in this House. If you’ll indulge me, I’d like to thank the members of my community of Essex, who put their faith in me as their representative, as their member of provincial Parliament. I carry their hopes and their aspirations each and every day when I walk into this wonderful building, so thanks to them as well.

Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your new role. That seat certainly looks comfortable, and it suits you.

From the first couple of days that I’ve had the ability to be in this House, I can already tell by the tone that we will all be wonderful friends by the end of this session.

It is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to the content of this bill, and in my role as the critic for labour for the New Democrats, it’s an issue that’s near and dear to my heart. I want to also thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for sharing his time with me.

The riding of Essex is a wonderful place. It is a mix of urban and rural, small hamlets: Lakeshore, Kingsville, LaSalle. As well, Leamington is in the riding of my good friend from Chatham–Kent. We have no public transit system, so you can imagine my wonderment as a new member coming to Toronto and finding out how efficiently and effectively you move so many people around.

It is really that issue, that effectiveness and the importance of a wholesome, healthy public transit system, that we’re discussing here today—all the more important to have arbitration; to have collective agreements that make sure the system works; to make sure it runs safely, effectively and cleanly. That’s why we have some issues, obviously, with the content of this bill, as my honourable colleague mentioned.

If it were not for the special designation, the essential services designation, we might actually indicate some support for it. We know that the members of that community are affected. We also know that the negotiators,

too, are coming to the conclusion that there will not be any headway made on negotiations.

I can tell you as a labourer, someone who has come out of the trade union movement myself, that I rely on my union to bargain on my behalf. It is a role they play to ensure that I have a good standard of living, that I have safe working conditions and that I am truly appreciated in my career. Knowing that, our union has always had the ability to negotiate with whom we call our contractor partners. These are construction firms in the Windsor and Essex county area. Some are large, some are small, but typically they're family firms. By the nature of their being family firms—you know, local history—I think they have some stake in the game; they have some skin in the game.

What I believe we're dealing with here is a conglomerate of multinational companies that are some of the largest private providers of transit in North America. For instance, Veolia—I don't know if I'm pronouncing that right—had 2010 revenues of \$50 billion. Now, that's not your mom-and-pop operation. The United Kingdom-based FirstGroup had \$10 billion in revenue in their last fiscal year.

I guess what we're dealing with here too is fairness. In comparison to other jurisdictions, and in comparison to workers who are doing similar work in and around the GTA, workers in York region are receiving roughly \$7.42 less for the same work that they are doing. We just don't think that is fair. Of course those workers are going to stand up for their rights and stand up for equality.

Also, the Conservative caucus mentioned that it is a program that is subsidized by York region taxpayers to the extent of \$4.11 for each ride. It makes that fare one of the highest in Ontario. We may actually want to break into a discussion of value for money when it comes to integrating private companies into our public transit system. I think that was mentioned earlier as well.

All told, the push toward deeming this an essential service is something we've seen not so long ago at the federal level with the Conservative government attempting to deem Air Canada workers and postal workers as essential and forcing them back to work. It's something that, in my mind, is not productive. It's an affront to the process of collective bargaining, a process that is enshrined in our rights here in Canada, enshrined in our charter. If we move toward that, I would submit that the NBA is in a lockout position today; let's deem them essential too, due to their massive payrolls and the fact that they contribute so much economically. Let's not move down that path. Let's let this process evolve. Let's let the negotiators at the bargaining table work through the process.

Also, recently a telephone poll of roughly 2,100 residents of the York region showed that 71% of those residents wanted the regional government to intervene. Seeing that the regional government is not prepared to do that, I think it is incumbent on us to try to figure out how we can help this process. Maybe just by the nature of us talking about it here may push the agenda.

I'll end, Mr. Speaker. This has been a wonderful inaugural speech. It really feels good; it feels comfortable. I like it here. It's fun. It's as fun as I expected it to be. I don't know how productive it will be, in the end.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Please, please.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, if we set the bar low enough, we can achieve anything, right?

I will end by saying that New Democrats stand firm with the transit workers and call on all parties to end the strike, get back to the table and enact binding arbitration with a neutral arbitrator.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating you in your position as Acting Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving companies that provide public transit services to The Regional Municipality of York.

1520

We all know that public transit is one of the major tools for moving people around from one point to the other, particularly in large municipalities, and York region is no exception. The residents of my riding of Richmond Hill live in the municipality of York region, and they are also affected by the strikes over the past five weeks. Thousands and thousands of residents of York region, including Richmond Hill, every day use public transit to go to work, to hospitals, to doctors, to dentists, shopping, to schools and to universities, and they're all affected by this strike.

That is why our government, the Minister of Labour and the Ministry of Labour, since the beginning of this dispute, have appointed a provincial labour mediator to bring the parties to the table and to assist them in coming up with a resolution to this issue, and they have been working very hard. In the past, the mediator has been very effective and efficient in solving and resolving labour disputes. Actually, last year, Mr. Speaker, 98% of labour disputes were resolved by the mediator.

We believe in negotiation. The parties should come to the table and negotiate and come up with an acceptable solution to this issue. That's why our Ministry of Labour and our government are encouraging people to come to the table and negotiate. Here, there are three contract companies, as our honourable member from the third party mentioned: Miller Transit, Veolia Transportation and First Student Canada. These are the contract employers in the region—and also the unions; they have to come to the table. They have to negotiate. We believe in collective bargaining.

We cannot, Mr. Speaker, for every strike bring a solution in this House and come up with back-to-work legislation. And when it comes to this particular case, York region, who is somehow the employer, although they are not directly the employer, should come to the House. They should come to the Ontario government and ask for help. They have never done that. In the case of the city of Toronto, the city of Toronto and the mayor of Toronto

came to the Ontario government and requested our assistance, for our help, this House's help. York region hasn't done so.

So the process should continue. We hope that both parties will come to the table and will agree on a mutually agreeable solution to solve this problem so that people can use public transit in a way that they should be doing.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to join my colleagues the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora and the MPP for Thornhill to call on this government to take action to end the York region transit strike.

In the course of the debate that has taken place so far today, there are a couple of things that I want to refer to, and one of them was in the remarks made by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. The point that she made, as I understand it, was that we should do nothing because the chair of York region hasn't asked for the province to get involved. At the same time, there is an indication from the same chair that no headway is being made in the negotiations as they currently stand, and I think that's exactly why we're here. You're missing the point. We are here because no one else is listening. I'm listening to my constituents. I'm listening to those people whose lives are interrupted; who can't get to work, who can't get to school, who can't provide themselves with the facility of getting around, and they do feel like victims because there's no one at the table that represents and speaks on their behalf.

We have a letter from the York region separate school board where they outline the kind of problems that their students have run into as a result of this. We also have the position that was taken in the election platform of the Liberals: "Public transit helps move people and goods faster; but it also keeps our air clean for ... children and seniors." You even claim to have made the largest investments in Ontario's history. Well, I have to ask you: What good are any of your words and promises if there is no transit system for people to use? What does it matter if we have lots of buses and infrastructure if the buses do not run?

We know that there have been meetings taking place at different times in the last five weeks, but they have not reached an agreement. York region, up to this point, has not become directly involved. The three MPPs have—and we have, in the absence of the kind of leadership that others could take. I think it's most important for people to understand that our purpose is to bring this strike to an end, to raise that awareness, to provide the opportunities for the parties to come together.

I want to also speak briefly about the member from Timmins–James Bay's concern. I would say to you that, in fact, the bill does ask for an arbitrator to be appointed to facilitate a fair and neutral agreement. I would also remind the member from Timmins–James Bay that one

of the purposes of second reading is, in fact, to continue the conversation; it is not there to provide a final position. That's why amendments can be brought in after second reading. So I would urge the member for Timmins–James Bay to look at this as an instrument and as a process; if there are parts of this bill, as he suggests, that he does have sympathy for, that he would take those into consideration in supporting the bill at second reading, which would then keep it on the table and allow for such kinds of amendments as he wishes.

In the meantime, speaking on behalf of my constituents, I feel this debate is essential to being able to provide them with a sense that we do care, we are interested in their livelihood and their well-being, and we are there to represent them. For that reason, we have no option but to bring this on the floor of the Ontario Legislature when no one else is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Greg Sorbara: It's unfortunate that my first opportunity to deliver remarks in this Legislature is on this subject, because it's a difficult subject. All of us from York region know that, in our community, it's not just students, it's not just workers, but it's a whole community that is having to put up with a transit strike that is really affecting the community. I agree with my friend from Thornhill: This is very disruptive. We are very concerned that that transit system begin running at full force as soon as possible.

I was frankly offended by my friend's remarks when he said that it was only himself and my friends from Newmarket–Aurora and from York–Simcoe who were doing anything about that strike. That's patent nonsense. It's just foolish to say that, and it's offensive. My friend from Richmond Hill, my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham and myself are equally involved in trying to find a settlement to this strike and making representations as forcibly as any member on that side. I want you to remember that.

The second thing that he needs to know is this: This strike will be settled, and it will be settled when the parties reasonably come together and, perhaps, send outstanding issues to binding arbitration, just as is proposed in my friend's bill.

But the great irony here is that my friend the finance critic for the Progressive Conservative Party is part of a party that, every single day since the election, has been demanding a public sector wage freeze. That is, they want every public sector worker in this province to have their contracts frozen—remember that? Zap, you're frozen—for two years. You're talking about public sector workers, people who are driving our buses.

On the one hand, you stand up and make great speeches. This morning in question period, your leader was demanding once again—and I'm quoting—that we instruct the Minister of Finance "to bring in a mandatory wage freeze for public sector workers." That's what you're asking for. Well, bus drivers are public sector workers, and when it's bus drivers, you say, "Oh, no, no,

no, we don't want a wage freeze there. No, no, no, we're getting calls from our constituents." You're saying, "We want binding arbitration, back-to-work legislation."

Interjections.

1530

Mr. Greg Sorbara: I'm just telling my friend that it's so inconsistent, it's so offensive, that on the one hand you would be—all that puffery about a public sector wage freeze—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your indulgence. It's getting a little loud in the chamber. I would recommend that some of the members cut it back a little bit.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've touched a nerve over there.

I just want to say to my friend that he knows, all the members from York region know and all the members in this Parliament know that it will not be long before these parties get together, as happens almost invariably in labour negotiations, and they will sit down and resolve their differences.

This is not a situation, tough as it is for our residents, where we need to bring in legislation, as my friend from Timmins–James Bay says, that makes it an essential service or provides for legislated binding arbitration. Arbitration will happen. This strike will end, and York region will get back to good bus service sooner than you think.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

The member from Thornhill has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to thank all of the participants in the debate: the members from Timmins–James Bay, Oak Ridges–Markham, Newmarket–Aurora, Essex, Richmond Hill and York–Simcoe, and especially the member from Vaughan. I want to say, in reference to his recent comments, I'm not really interested in what is offensive to you; I'm interested in getting the buses back on the roads of York region.

We have a common concern. Regardless of from what direction you come, the NDP, the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party are united in one thing: We all want to see those buses running again. We have union leaders sitting in the gallery here today who are looking for the binding arbitration that this bill puts on the table so that we could have those buses running again.

We have an opportunity here to pass this bill through second reading, take it to committee and do whatever we have to to make it work. The fact that we have word, through the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, on what the regional chair says are substantial offers on the table doesn't matter one whit. The reason it doesn't matter is because that represents one side of the equation. Obviously, the other side of the equation has no interest in whether or not those offers are good, bad or indiffer-

ent, because it won't come to the table, which means we're at a stalemate.

That's why we've had this debate here today. We need to publicly air what the people of York region want and what the people of York region need. We, in the absence of any action from the government or anywhere else, have to bring this legislation through second reading so that we can see to what we want. And what do we want? We want good public transit service for the people of York region, just as we want it for Toronto or any other part of the province.

I urge all members to recognize that what they're doing is accepting that premise by voting for second reading of this bill, and we'll deal with the rest of it in committee.

RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT
(HST REBATE FOR HOME
HEATING), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL
(REMBOURSEMENT DE LA TVH
POUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE)

Mr. Mantha moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate of the Ontario portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax in respect of certain home heating costs / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour prévoir un remboursement de la composante ontarienne de la taxe de vente harmonisée à l'égard de certains frais de chauffage domestique.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, let me congratulate you. I look forward to, from this distance over here, looking towards you for your wisdom, your guidance and, as a new MPP, your assistance in my role in completing my task to serve my constituents.

It is an honour to address this Legislature. It's a pleasure to do so as a representative of my neighbours, friends and family, and communities in Algoma–Manitoulin. Soon, like many Ontarians, I will get up and reach for my toque, mitts, boots and scarf before I leave the house, and then I might reach for a shovel before I get to my car.

There is a point here: It's getting colder. It's getting really cold out there, and Ontarians are going to see the cost of staying warm go up. We all live in Ontario. We know that, come winter, the heating bills go up.

Bientôt, il va falloir tirer ma toque, mes mitaines, et puis mon foulard, avant de partir de la maison. Et comme défi, avant de me rendre à ma voiture, je vais chercher une pelle aussi. Tu sais pleinement comment ça fait frais dehors.

It's a fact of life. I can tell you that in Elliot Lake we know a thing or two about cold winters. It's also a fact

that these essential costs hit families and lower-income Ontarians the hardest. People across Ontario are facing another winter of pain, with the unfair HST on top of their home heating. Another winter of paying the HST on top of their already existing home heating costs will make this winter a real tough one. We can't wait to make a decision on this until next summer. Working together to take the HST off home heating is something that needs to be done now.

It is a fact that the Liberal government made staying warm a lot more expensive for Ontarians by adding the HST to the cost of home heating. This was done in the face of overall energy costs which are expected to grow by 50% over the next five years. Everywhere we look, costs are going up, and adding the HST adds these costs where Ontarians can least afford to manage it. It also puts greater stress on people living on fixed incomes, people living in homes they cannot afford to insulate; in short, those who can least afford it. Every time a household heating bill goes up by \$1, it actually goes up by \$1.13. It adds up; it all adds up.

De jour en jour, le coût de la vie augmente, et la TVH ajoute des coûts aux Ontariens et surtout à ceux qui ne peuvent pas y arriver avec le budget familial. La pression sur leur vie quotidienne avec les gens qui n'ont pas les moyens d'investir dans leur propre maison—le tout est énorme.

En bref, c'est eux qui ne peuvent pas financer ces demandes adéquatement. À tout instant que le prix du chauffage augmente d'un dollar, réellement l'augmentation est d'un dollar et treize sous.

The HST is costing the average family budget hundreds of dollars more every year. Where does this hit hardest? On essentials, and it hurts Ontario families. It's added hundreds of dollars in new costs. It was New Democrats who demonstrated that the HST is actually adding to the costs that Ontario's people are facing. In fact, we know that, in 2009, the Liberals had a secret document that showed that the HST was going to cost Ontario families an average of \$1,500 more every year.

1540

Sure, some of this HST comes from discretionary spending, but what's outrageous is that it is also being added on household items—things like home heating. It's just unfair. It's up to Ontario households to manage their budgets and discretionary spending. But I don't think that keeping the furnace on qualifies as being discretionary. Turning the furnace off just isn't an option; it's not a choice. Taking the HST off home heating would save a family with two kids an average of \$100 per year. It will put more money back into the pockets of those Ontarians who live further north—places where the cost of living is often higher in general.

Éliminer la TVH sur le prix du chauffage retournera en moyenne 100 \$ à chaque année au budget des familles qui comprennent deux enfants. Pour les gens du Nord, ceci remettra des sous additionnels dans leurs poches, surtout dans les endroits où le coût de la vie est souvent plus haut en général.

The rising cost of household essentials is a problem we're facing across Ontario. We know that Ontarians are anxious about their jobs and their ability to make ends meet. This sort of anxiety is often exacerbated during the holiday seasons. This is a very modest first step in order to ease the burden on Ontario families.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. If you could take the sidebars outside. I'm having trouble hearing the member, and there are two large sidebars on either side of me. Please take it outside. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thus far, this government has been interested in giving blank cheques to businesses that ship jobs out of province, all the while adding the cost of essentials onto Ontario families. They are content to give tax breaks to executives going to Leafs games or box seats at the Rogers Centre, but giving a break to everyday Ontario families isn't a priority. They would rather pay billions for failed power plants which never should have been built than help folks manage their own household costs.

Giving a tax break to big businesses while making Ontario households pay more for everyday essentials creates the wrong priorities. Ultimately, it all comes down to that: priorities. The actions of the Liberals would seem to show that their priorities are to let the salaries of public sector executives skyrocket, salaries which are paid by everyday Ontarians. It would seem to show that their priorities are letting businesses write off entertainment like box seats for Leafs or expense account dinners that cost more than most people's car payments.

I think it's time we try something new. Let's try putting people first in this province. Earlier this week we heard the minority government make a promise—a good promise—to work with the opposition on good ideas that improve Ontario families and their quality of life.

Je pense que c'est le moment de saisir une nouvelle avenue pour la province et de mettre les gens en priorité. Plus tôt dans la semaine, nous avons entendu nos collègues du gouvernement minoritaire faire promesse de travailler et consulter avec l'opposition sur des bonnes idées qui amélioreront la qualité de vie pour tous les Ontariens.

Le premier pas, c'est maintenant, et c'est de prendre l'étape, de prendre le pas, de bâtir un avenir prometteur et de commencer par éliminer la TVH.

The first step is giving people a much needed break. Taking the HST off essentials is a step in the right direction. Some of the next steps involve capping public CEO salaries and ending the policy of blank cheques to big businesses; we'll cross those bridges when we get there. But let's build this first bridge. Let's build this one and let's start.

In the throne speech, the Liberal government said that they were committed to those who are vulnerable. Well, this will help those who are struggling to make ends meet.

In the throne speech, the Liberal government said that they were committed to a quality of life for families.

Well, this will help families keep their children comfortable and healthy.

In the throne speech, the Liberal government appeared to extend an olive branch to the opposition to work together on good public policy. This, my friend, is good public policy.

We can start setting the tone for this session of this Legislature right now by showing Ontarians that we can work together when it comes to the best interests of everybody in this province. This is not a reckless bill. This is not a bill designed to play any type of politics. This is a reasonable bill that reflects the needs of people in this province.

At the start of every session, we hear members on both sides of the floor say nice words, generous language, and we speak about shared values. Well, folks, it's time to put the theory into practice, because talk is cheap and Ontario is watching.

New Democrats have made it clear that our doors are open to members on both sides, and we want to get down to work and help Ontarians. I sincerely hope that the Conservatives and the Liberals will recognize that taking the HST off the cost of home heating will provide much-needed relief for many, many Ontario families.

Ceci est un petit pas—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Time's up. Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. Speaker, may I say what a commendable job you're doing in the chair. We're enjoying having you there.

This has been a year in which people worldwide have risen against injustice and inequity: against injustice by toppling inflexible and unresponsive regimes in Africa and the Middle East; against inequity in how people all over the world have pointed out that the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people exists at the expense of the more than 90% of the rest of us. And it is how this private member's bill proposes to take yet more money from the pockets of the poor and the middle class and transfer it disproportionately to the bank accounts of Ontario's very wealthy that is my reason for not supporting it.

Speaker, this bill comes from a new member, and it's an idea that, this fall, his party couldn't sell at the doors. So, in the spirit of being constructive and co-operative in this minority Parliament, let's discuss the idea that Ontario's voters did not buy.

There is no free lunch. What is given in one tax measure to one group of people has to be taken from another. The member will agree that he is asking Ontarians to take a precious \$350 million away from one group of taxpayers and transfer that money to another group of taxpayers, and it's the wrong group in both cases.

The overwhelming majority of homes are heated by one of two fuels: electricity and natural gas. The member's proposal would actually raise prices for those whose homes are heated by electricity. Ontario's clean energy benefit, which is already the law of the land, takes 10%, not 8%, off hydro bills, no matter what you use

hydro for. The member's proposal then is a tax grab, pure and simple.

The clean energy benefit saves the typical householder about \$150 per year, or to put it another way, that's all the HST on \$1,875 in electricity purchases. That pays all the HST on a bimonthly hydro bill of \$312—and that's a lot of electricity.

1550

The member's proposal can't do as well on electricity as Ontario's existing clean energy benefit is already doing. In fact the member's proposal, as it would apply to electricity, would cost the average householder an additional \$30, not to mention the sheer impossibility of sorting out electricity kilowatt hours used for heating from electricity kilowatt hours used for everything else.

Let's look at natural gas. While electricity prices have been going up all over the world, which is why we have the Ontario clean energy benefit, natural gas prices have been going down all over the world. So why does the member propose a tax giveaway to users of a commodity whose price has been steadily falling? For the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and his 73,400 constituents, Ontario already offers northern families up to \$204 per year through the northern Ontario energy credit.

What does the northern Ontario energy credit mean to hard-working families in Algoma-Manitoulin? It means they have an income-tested way to offset their natural gas bills. Those of modest and moderate means benefit most, as it should be. That \$204, if your household qualifies for it, pays all the HST on \$2,550 worth of natural gas bills, or to put it another way, that's all the HST on a monthly gas bill of \$212.50. If your natural gas bill is lower than that, you're coming out ahead. Remember, you get all that without removing the HST on natural gas or even fuel oil heating bills.

So why does the member for Algoma-Manitoulin propose to rebate the same money twice on natural gas, a fuel whose price is falling, when leading economists say that three times the share of the proposed NDP tax grab will go to households in the highest one-fifth income brackets? This makes no sense, and that's why Ontarians gave it a thumbs down in October. In fact, proposing that residents dip into taxpayer funds once for the northern Ontario energy credit and a second time for a proposed HST credit would indeed make the member and his followers double-dippers.

On top of the unnecessary and duplicative measures proposed in the member's tax giveaway, the member's bill also ignores the enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit, which is \$1,044, already available for seniors, and \$917, already available for non-seniors. That measure, already implemented, rebates seniors in Algoma-Manitoulin all the HST on up to \$13,050 in purchases, and rebates non-seniors the HST on up to \$11,462 of anything else they purchase.

Speaker, I do not agree that we need to take \$350 million from schools, hospitals, senior care and children to do what Ontario's existing modern taxation system

already does anyway. That's why I'm going to vote against this private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this bill. Our leader, Tim Hudak, spoke to this issue time and time again throughout the recent election campaign. Our leader has made our position very clear to Ontarians: We know you need relief, and it's coming.

Between 2003 and 2011, the residential hydro rate has skyrocketed from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour to 10.7 cents a kilowatt hour, a 150% increase. Energy prices continue to rise as a result of this government's expensive and patchwork energy experiments, and Ontario families simply can't take anymore. They need relief.

We have all heard stories from people who are struggling—really struggling—to pay their home heating bills. This is especially true, as my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin pointed out, in northern Ontario, where heating isn't a luxury; it's an absolute necessity. Our winters are longer in the north. Our winters are colder in the north.

Let me give you a real-life example of the differences. This is something that occurred throughout the last election campaign when I knocked on the door of Roger and Monique Beaulieu. They live on King Street in North Bay, Ontario, which was my boyhood home. I knocked on their door, and we chatted about their energy bills. I asked them to show me their hydro bill and their natural gas bill. While my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin suggests it's \$100 savings, let me tell you that for Roger and Monique Beaulieu it is \$243.60. That is the difference that they would save because of the colder winter and the longer winter—\$243.60 in the pockets of that hard-working family, the Beaulieus in North Bay, Ontario.

This bill can make a meaningful difference in the lives of Ontario families, families like the Beaulieus. Our party will be supporting this bill as it meets the criteria for one of our three priorities, and that is to support families and give them the relief they need.

We urge the members opposite to join us in this straight up or down vote to bring immediate relief to your constituents as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to have a chance to speak to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin's private member's bill, but particularly my pleasure to do so with you sitting in the chair. Congratulations on your first day in the chair. It's very becoming of you to be sitting in the Speaker's chair, and we're very proud of you for doing that.

There were some comments that were made across the way, and our members are going to talk to the bill because, obviously, we've brought it forward. We're very proud of it. We think it is absolutely the right thing to do because of what Mr. Mantha—sorry, the member

from Algoma–Manitoulin—has said and because of what the member for Nipissing has said.

It is obvious that this is absolutely the right thing to do, that it was the wrong tax in the first place to be foisted on Ontarians at a time when they were suffering from the impacts of a recession. Not only was it the wrong tax and brought in at the wrong time, but it was put on basic essentials—basic essentials—like home heating and hydro, things that people don't have a choice but to consume. Yes, people can do things like implement retrofits to their home to reduce their consumption, but guess what? They don't have the money to do it. And with the HST on their utility bills, they have even less money to invest in those kinds of energy-saving types of retrofits.

But you know what? I nearly fell off my chair, quite frankly; I nearly swallowed my tongue when I heard a Liberal talking about who it is that benefits from the HST, like somehow everyday people are benefiting from the HST. We know that companies are benefiting from the HST, and we know that companies are also benefiting from across-the-board tax cuts that these guys are putting in place. It's the people at the top that the Liberals continue to serve.

So when the member from Mississauga–Streetsville actually has the gall to say that somehow our bill here today favours the wealthy—really, if I was chewing gum, I would have swallowed it. I found it quite unbelievable. It is so untrue. Everybody knows that the people at the bottom are the ones who spend much more of a percentage of their income on things like home heating and hydro, so they're the very ones who benefit more: fixed-income seniors, people with low incomes, everyday middle-class families who are not able to make ends meet anymore, those middle-class families who are now in the 99%. The only ones who are benefiting from this government's tax policies are the 1%, and that is the absolute truth.

1600

Speaker, billions and billions of dollars are being lost on the revenue side in across-the-board corporate tax cuts that are not doing anything. They're not creating jobs; they're not stimulating investment; they're not training workers. It is the wrong tax policy.

The HST that takes money out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians and puts it in the pockets of the corporate sector, which then sends jobs somewhere else and doesn't keep them here in Ontario, is not the right tax policy, so we are proud to have brought in this bill today.

Now, I know that we don't agree on everything with the Conservatives beside us here in opposition, but there are some things we agree on, and in this case, the HST off home heating is something that absolutely they talked about during the campaign and that we talked about during the campaign.

Hello, a wake-up call to the Liberals: They didn't get a majority this time around. So they may smugly talk about how people decided at the last election, but guess what? They decided not to give you all the power. That's why

you have to start listening to the people and understand that they do need a break. Maybe you should think about how you vote on this particular private member's bill today, because you have people in your ridings who are suffering just as badly as the people in our ridings. We look forward to your support in this particular initiative.

Speaker, CEO salaries in the public sector going through the roof; corporate tax cuts to corporations that aren't investing, that aren't creating jobs; private power payoffs to companies to save Liberal seats—those are the wrong priorities, the wrong choices. Let's get the HST off home heating once and for all and give people a break.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

First of all, I want to thank my community of Ottawa Centre for giving me the opportunity again to serve them in this great Legislature. I am humbly obliged to them.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have just come out of a campaign. Campaigns are a really good time for us to be out in the community and to have those very important conversations, door to door to door, about issues that are important. I can tell you that in my riding of Ottawa Centre, there were two issues that came up again and again and again which my constituents wanted me to work on. Number one: the economy. Everybody, in light of the instability, the uncertainty that exists in the global marketplace, especially what is going on in Europe, spoke about the need to ensure that we in Ontario, and in Canada, of course, grow our economy and that we all work together and work hard to ensure that we not only strengthen our economy but also create new jobs.

Given the economic uncertainty, given the fact that we are seeing there are less revenues coming in within the provincial government, we need to make sure what wherever we decide to spend our money, we do so in a wise fashion and we do so in a fashion that is actually going to create new jobs.

This measure, introduced by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, does not create one new job in the province of Ontario—not a single new job. This is not going to help strengthen our economy. It is not going to make sure that the hard-working people get good-paying, meaningful jobs in our province.

What essentially it's going to do is take \$350 million out of our revenue source, and that money will disappear, as opposed to taking that money and investing it in a fashion that creates good jobs.

For example, we are introducing the healthy home renovation credit. It is going to cost about \$135 million or so, in a three-year period. That is not only going to help our seniors to ensure that they continue to live in their own homes as long as they want, but it also is going to create new jobs in an important construction sector in our province. It's a win-win situation: Not only do we

help our seniors, but we also help our construction sector by creating new jobs in other related industries.

That's something that we have to be very mindful of. I think, in these economic times, what we need to do is make and take responsible choices. We need to decide how we're going to spend our money—which is not our money; it's taxpayers' money, and we need to be very, very careful about that.

Now, I find it very ironic that just earlier this afternoon there was another motion, by the member from Cambridge, talking about fulfilling all promises of building hospitals. By the way, our government has built 18 hospitals over the last eight years and will continue to invest in our communities, not only in terms of building hospitals—as opposed to them closing hospitals—but also ensuring that we continue to build new schools and that we continue to implement full-day kindergarten in our communities.

I ask that member from Cambridge and all of their members: So, what would you like to have? Would you like to have this particular bill, this \$350 million taken out of the treasury in terms of an HST relief on home heating, or would you like to spend that money on building a hospital or two or ensuring that full-day kindergarten is available to our four- and five-year-olds across the province?

These are simple matters of choices that we need to really understand in these tough economic times. We do not have the luxury of spending money willy-nilly and being able to do things like there are no consequences. So if you want to make sure that we have got good health care, if we want to make sure that we have good education—and that's the second thing, Mr. Speaker, that my constituents spoke about in this last election: They wanted to make sure that we have a healthy economy and they wanted to make sure that we have good schools and hospitals, and that's where we should be making investments.

I, for one, will not be voting for this bill because I want to make sure that we continue to invest in our seniors, that we continue to invest in our health care, that we continue to invest in our education. I want to make sure that every single elementary school in my riding of Ottawa Centre has a full-day kindergarten program. I want to make sure that my inner-city schools are—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it's somewhat surreal to see you in the chair. It seems a lot quieter on this side of the House with you up there. But I do want to congratulate you on your re-election and also ascending to the chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Leeds-Grenville: There seems to be a lot of talk about the decibel level projected by myself in past life. Things have changed, and I respectfully ask the member to go easy. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, thank you for your leniency and understanding, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the member for Algoma–Manitoulin on bringing Bill 4 to the floor today. I think it's very appropriate. You used words about setting the tone, and I can't agree with you more that this bill and co-operation from the opposition on this bill will really set the tone.

I know I've just been in this place for 20 months. I had a by-election on March 4, less than four months before the HST was enacted, and I can tell you that the same concern that I heard at the door in February and early March 2010 was even more amplified on July 1 of that year, when the HST came forward. This election that we just finished on October 6—it's not just the HST on heating. I had a 90-year-old man in a walker come to not just my campaign office but, after my election, to my constituency office expressing concern about the extra \$900 that the HST costs him on his funeral.

1610

You know, we had snow in eastern Ontario this week. Every single, solitary day this week in my constituency office in Leeds–Grenville, before both the snow hit the ground and after, we had people who couldn't pay their hydro bill, who didn't know how they were going to make ends meet to be able to deal with either a deposit or just the bill.

So when the government looks at us in opposition—and remember, we've got a couple more seats than you do—you have to realize that our constituents made it very clear to us that we're going to stand up. Right after the election, I had person after person, no matter where I was in my riding, in the urban or the rural area, say, "Don't give up the fight. We want that relief on our hydro bills."

And I know there are lots of fans in this chamber about our Changebook, and I'm not using this as a prop, Speaker. It's page 4—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It's a prop.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's not a prop. I've dropped it. Calm down. I know you're big fans. The member for Toronto Centre has a copy as well. I appreciate that you're reading it, sir, and I know deep, deep in your heart that there are sections in that beautiful document that you support.

But clearly, clearly, people told us they wanted relief. They were at their breaking point. They want that—

Mr. John O'Toole: I want some time.

Mr. Steve Clark: You'll get some time, the member for Durham.

I want to address just one thing that the member for Ottawa Centre talked about. He boasted about the healthy home renovation tax credit. I want to read to you, in my final comments, an email I received—they gave me permission to read it today—from Marcel and Ann Labelle from Brockville. The subject is "Healthy home renovation tax credit," which they call HHRTC:

"Please continue to press the Liberals to reduce heating costs by the 8% provincial portion of the HST. To us, this is preferable to the HHRTC if it becomes a choice between the two. We are seniors on a fixed

seniors pension and I have to work part-time at 68 years old with not too good health and at minimum wage just to barely survive on a daily basis. We own our home with a mortgage, and it is a continuous struggle to just make the mortgage payment, pay the monthly expenses of insurance, heat, hydro and water/sewer. There is no way we could afford to renovate anything and therefore could never take advantage of the HHRTC. The only way seniors such as ourselves can continue to live and maintain our homes is with reductions of taxes/fees that we are continually bombarded with and with no end in sight. I would agree to less 'non-essential' government-provided services if this would guarantee a lowering of present taxes/fees and, at the very minimum, no increases."

That's what seniors are saying, that they don't have \$10,000, and I wholeheartedly support Bill 4. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, I would like to continue this debate first by congratulating you on your appointment as Speaker. I'd like my honourable colleagues to know that I have come to know the honourable member, and he has tried to teach me everything he knows.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: But those who know me know I don't take advice very well.

It's truly an honour to be able to stand here to represent the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. It's a very rural riding, and when I went door to door, people said, "Please, speak for me. Please, speak for me." Most of the people in my rural riding, or a large percentage, including myself, don't have access to natural gas. So we can have a big debate about natural gas, but a lot of people in my riding heat with oil. Oil is no deal.

I have an extremely high percentage of senior citizens in my riding. It's a rural riding. They live in rural houses. They are just getting by. For me to tell them, "You know what? Why don't you borrow another 10 grand and put in new windows?" when they can't pay their bills now—we can't keep going on like this.

I knocked on doors and had people cry because their overall cost of keeping their home was higher than their income. And they have no option, because there is no affordable housing for these people to go to. We are going to tell them to put in new windows and that's the answer to their problems.

I wholeheartedly support this bill on behalf of the citizens of my riding who can't pay their heating bills now. Some of them are going to have to pick. In my riding in January it's minus 40, so they're going to have to pick between heat and food. I hope the rest of the honourable members will please, please think of that when they support my honourable colleague's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. Again, I'd like to repeat what everyone has said: Nice to have you in the

chair, and certainly you won't be named when you're sitting there.

I'd also like to commend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and his remarks. I think the way he expressed it—and the member who just spoke—indicated what most of us heard while we were campaigning this past fall. We were listening to the people of Ontario, and in fact this member has brought this forward out of respect for what we heard.

What is apparent here today is that the government side does not appear to be listening, once again. They're going to barge ahead and ignore the plight of seniors and people in parts of Ontario where heating their home is an absolutely essential necessity and an expensive option.

I was very impressed by the member from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, who remarked on the couple he visited who said they would save about \$240 a year, I believe it was. That money would find its way back into their grocery bill or their municipal taxes or having home improvements done to avoid future costs.

The real compliment here is that I believe the members in the NDP party have recognized the strength of our campaign. Tim Hudak had, on page 4—it's almost verbatim of the bill on page 4. I have the bill here, and it's almost word for word. I'm going to read what our Changebook said. It said, "We live in Canada. Heating our homes is not a luxury. Increasing the cost with a surprise tax increase is grossly unfair. We will remove the provincial portion of the HST from every home heating bill." So there's no surprise here that we support this bill.

I think it's important for the people of Ontario paying attention to this debate this afternoon that this is generally a free vote. There are members there from all over Ontario. The people of Ontario are counting on you, in this first week of this legislative session, to stand up for hard-working, ordinary people and give them some of the HST money back. That's what this debate is about: listening to people and voting for your constituents. Or are you going to obey the orders of the whip and Premier McGuinty and deny the people the least little break of \$80? We'll see how it's a bloc vote on that other side. But the majority of the people on this side are with the people of Ontario,

This is a very defining moment in this early stage of this 40th Parliament. The majority was not on the government side. The majority is the NDP and Tim Hudak and the Conservative Party together, supporting this legislation which gives relief to families. That's a principle that we stand on. This vote is really a principle, a voting on principle, of what we heard during the election.

I respect the Speaker here. I know the vote will be called on this and I'd expect it would be a recorded vote. I'd like to be on notice as saying I'm going to put an article in the paper this week indicating that this relief for families was denied by Premier McGuinty. That's the way I see it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has a two-minute response.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): How many minutes have we got left? Okay. Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt, who was trying before. I got mixed up because you mixed me up there.

1620

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll take full responsibility for this. There were too many people standing in the way; I agree. They should be at their desks, listening to this very intense debate.

I don't share the doom and gloom of the last speaker. I think the people in this House will do the right thing. I think the people in this House will listen to their constituents and give them the relief that they have been asking for.

I represent the beautiful riding of Nickel Belt. This is the most beautiful riding of all 107, and I'm really happy that I've got it. There are 33 little communities. We don't have natural gas in most of Nickel Belt and I, like all of my constituents, tend to heat with oil. When the oil truck came down my little stretch of road this year, it was a bit of a shocker to get the first bill. The last time they came was in April, and they don't come from April all the way till the end of October. At the end of October, when it started to get cold, they came, and here was my bill: \$759. That was to fill up my tank for the first time of the winter.

But they will come back. Every month now, they will come back and fill up my tank because I heat with oil, like everybody else in Nickel Belt, because we don't have access to this ever-decreasing cost of natural gas.

I visit the 33 communities in Nickel Belt. I got to one of the communities, a beautiful community called Cartier. So I'm in Cartier and talking to the people there, and this lady comes to the door. I can tell by the home that she is from modest means, and when I see the Phentex slippers that have been patched in three different colours, I had a pretty good idea that she's not on the rich side.

She goes and gets her oil bill, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? It is identical to mine. She had a \$750 bill to fill up her oil tank. That's more than her pension. And that was just to fill up the tank. She knows that there will be another seven fill-ups coming up through the winter. Then, with her little glasses, she points to this; she points to the HST. She's not happy about this. She knows that this is a tax that was added. It was never there before. The cost of oil has gone through the roof. She hoped we could do something about that.

But she knows that we can do something about this HST. We could take \$50 off of her bill right here, right now, this afternoon, if you listen to your heart and if you listen to the people in your riding.

M. Rosario Marchese: En français.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je sais que vous avez tous eu la chance de vous promener dans vos comtés, puis de parler

avec vos constituants. Quand vous avez fait la campagne électorale qui vous a amené ici, je suis certaine que vous l'avez entendu. Tout le monde ici, on n'a pas peur de dire que lorsqu'on est allé cogner aux portes, les gens nous ont parlé de leurs factures. Ils nous ont parlé de leurs factures de chauffage. C'était l'automne. On commençait à ouvrir les systèmes de chauffage, puis on savait qu'il y avait la taxe de vente harmonisée qui avait été ajoutée aux frais de chauffage. De nous faire croire que vous ne l'avez pas entendu, c'est de dire que vous n'écoutez pas les Ontariens et les Ontariennes.

Ce qu'on vous demande aujourd'hui, c'est d'écouter les Ontariens et les Ontariennes et faire ce qu'ils vous demandent. Donnez-leur un petit break. C'est tout ce qu'ils vous demandent. Donnez-leur un petit break. On est capable de faire ça ici ensemble, si on travaille ensemble. Moi, je ne crois pas ce que le député a dit avant. Je crois qu'aujourd'hui, on va prendre la bonne décision parce que c'est la décision que les Ontariens et les Ontariennes nous demandent de prendre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no time left, now the member from Algoma–Manitoulin has a two-minute response.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'll just do this briefly. I got a letter from a veteran and his heating bill or his oil bill. He took 492 units. The HST cost on it was \$40.90. The following month, he had to take an additional 225 units. It was \$18.68 for March and April. We're looking at \$62 in two months. This is for a veteran who has given his life to our country.

One last note—and, by the way, this is from a gentleman who is from Marathon, which is not in my riding. I know that the citizens who are in Algoma–Manitoulin, their messages—I haven't gotten back to my offices up in Elliot Lake, but they're there. I know I'm on the right path. We know we're on the right path.

I'll sum it up by an individual named Mr. John Parker, who sent me this letter from here in Toronto, and he sums it up quite eloquently: "... my high praise to you for attempting something sensible"—something sensible.

This is really something that we can achieve for all Ontarians. It doesn't have to be such a divisive issue every time we make a decision. It doesn't have to be this or that. Let's set the priorities. Let's set Ontario on the right path. Let's move forward. Let's give Ontarians a break. The last time I checked with the people in Algoma–Manitoulin, when I was knocking on their doors—I'm doing what they told me to do.

To my friends across the way, I look forward to working on many common goals. I also look forward to working with my friend from Nipissing.

To my friends across the way on that side, there's one thing you need to remember: Algoma–Manitoulin is on this side. It's no longer on that side; it's on this side, and I hear what they're telling me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Consideration—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't know if we're going to prolong this debate or not, but I do believe the member from Niagara Falls wanted to speak to this bill, so if we could—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today in the Ottawa Citizen there appeared to have been either a mistake by the government or a change to composition. It said that the member from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order.

Consideration of private members' public business has concluded before the expiry of the two and a half hours allotted. This House is therefore suspended until 4:32 p.m., at which time I'll be putting the question to the House.

The House suspended proceedings from 1627 to 1632.

HOSPITALS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Mr. Leone has moved private member's notice of motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I believe I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

We will dispense with that at the end of the session.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll deal with it.

YORK REGION TRANSIT LABOUR DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL AU SEIN DES SERVICES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This will be postponed until the moment of the end of the session.

I'll have to defer to my friend from Simcoe–Grey, who has this down pat.

RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT
(HST REBATE FOR HOME
HEATING), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL
(REMBOURSEMENT DE LA TVH
POUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE)

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Mantha has moved second reading of Bill 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I did hear a no.

All in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

It’s so close. I believe the ayes have it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think you’ve got five. We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1634 to 1639.

HOSPITALS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We’ll now deal with ballot item number 1, Mr. Leone’s private notice of motion number 1. Please rise and remain standing for ye.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	O’Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Campbell, Sarah	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Vanhof, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

YORK REGION TRANSIT LABOUR
DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT
DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL
AU SEIN DES SERVICES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote?

Interjections: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, rise and remain standing, please.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	
Jackson, Rod	O’Toole, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, rise and remain standing, please.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Natyshak, Taras
Bentley, Christopher	Gélinas, France	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Piruzza, Teresa
Best, Margaret	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Schein, Jonah
Campbell, Sarah	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sorbara, Greg
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Vanhof, John
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 37; the nays are 67.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll have the doors open for 30 seconds.

RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT
(HST REBATE FOR HOME
HEATING), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL
(REMBOURSEMENT DE LA TVH
POUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE)

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Mantha has moved second reading of Bill 4. All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Campbell, Sarah	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 54; the nays are 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is ordered for the Committee of the Whole House.

Interjections: No.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I refer it to the justice policy committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is the majority of the House in favour of that move? Agreed? Agreed. So be it.

The time for private members' public business having expired, it's time for orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

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

The House adjourned at 1654.

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. Dave Levac

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
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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 Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	
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
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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 Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
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
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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