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Monday 28 November 2011

Lundi 28 novembre 2011

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 November 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 novembre 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let us pray.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in a moment of silence for reflection.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to welcome the chicken industry's Team Ontario representatives of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors, who are here with us today.

Tim Hudak and I are looking forward to meeting with them this afternoon. I hope all members will take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about Ontario's chicken industry and enjoy some chicken wings during their reception this evening in the legislative dining room. We welcome you there too, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, member.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to introduce Derek Thompson. Derek is a GO Transit customer service ambassador. On September 7, Derek saved a life by using an automated defibrillator on a rider who had gone into cardiac arrest. Please welcome Derek Thompson.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have the Nature Conservancy Canada holding a reception this morning in committee room 230, immediately following question period. We have a number of their key people here. I want to introduce them: Margaret Kelch, chair of Nature Conservancy Ontario; James Duncan, the Ontario vice-president; and board members Gary Goldberg, Garry Innanen and Ted Ecclestone.

I certainly want to invite members to enjoy some food, and learn about the good work that Nature Conservancy Ontario and Canada is doing in ridings across the province to help protect and nurture Ontario's natural treasures. Also, they can pick up a nice, free 12-inch white pine, which I know all members will want to get.

Please welcome the members of Nature Conservancy Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your recent election.

Today, I have guests coming from the Terry Fox Public School junior choir, who will be singing in the corridor around 12:15. I would encourage all members to take

the time to watch them, because they will be doing an amazing performance.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to add my additional greeting this morning to Team Ontario. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is the largest processor and consumer of chicken in the country, and our government is very, very proud to support them.

So this morning, I want to introduce everybody, but I do want to introduce—and it's an interesting occasion, because this morning we have both the chicken farmers and the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors working in tandem.

The chairman of the chicken farmers, Murray Booy, is here—Murray, welcome—and Reg Cliche, the chairman of the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors. Welcome to you and all your colleagues. Thank you very much for being here.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to introduce a good friend and the president and vice-chancellor of Lakehead University, Dr. Brian Stevenson. Welcome, Brian.

Of course, as everybody knows, Lakehead University will be the site of the first law school ever in northern Ontario and the first one in Ontario in 43 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Acting Premier.

Acting Premier, you have a spending crisis in the province of Ontario. In fact, if there was a ministry of interest payments, it would be the third-largest ministry in all of government, just behind health and education.

Minister, it's time to take action today to rein in the runaway costs of the McGuinty government. Don't you think it reasonable—I'll ask you again—to extend your public sector wage freeze from simply putting it on non-union employees and, making it fair for everyone, make sure we spread it out to all public sector employees? If we want to preserve public services for generations to come, isn't this an important and fair step to take today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First, I would characterize the fact that we have managed to keep the deficit coming down in each of the last two years as an important achievement, Mr. Speaker. Last year the deficit figure came in, as a result of some one-time transfers, better

than had been anticipated, but we are still right on target with what we laid out two years ago in the 2010 budget. Compare that, for instance, with the federal government, who announced last week that they are now extending their date to balance, Mr. Speaker. Governments in the western—and by the way, my guess is that they're going to extend it another year, because their numbers, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office, just don't work up.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to work with the public and broader public sectors, with management, with unions and, most importantly, with the people of Ontario as we move back to budget.

What I can say to the Leader of the Opposition is that we will reject the types of practices that he had when he was part of a government that slashed and burned and undermined confidence—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. I think in making his comparisons, the minister should be accurate: The federal deficit is actually heading down, while the deficit of the province of Ontario is actually heading up.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister shakes his head. We were here last Wednesday when you indicated the deficit was \$14 billion last year, and now it's over \$16 billion this year. That's up in the province of Ontario, when families want it to go down.

Let me give you another angle here, Minister: Statistics Canada came out, at the end of the week, and said that for the first time ever, wages in Saskatchewan are higher than wages in Ontario. In fact, under the McGuinty government this past year, wages have gone down for private sector workers in the province of Ontario. So Minister, if private sector workers are seeing their wages go down, isn't it fair and reasonable that public sector workers should have their wages frozen to help us balance the books?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the provincial economy is experiencing growth again this year. In fact, the deficit is coming down. It's down from a high of \$24.7 billion. So what the Leader of the Opposition says is factually incorrect. He's right: The deficit last year came in lower than had been anticipated as a result of one-time transactions; for instance, Mr. Speaker, we helped Chrysler and General Motors and kept 400,000 people working.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there are enormous challenges in the economy today, both nationally and provincially. Saskatchewan is benefiting, obviously, from the potash industry and natural gas. I think if we look at things realistically, we might also want to take into account that this year Ontario's eighth grade students are leading the country in math and writing.

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Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of difficult choices ahead. I look forward to working with the leader of the opposition using facts—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I would expect that those grade 8 students would know that the deficit went up from \$14 billion to \$16 billion. They would know that's actually an increase, to say the least, Minister of Finance.

Minister, let's get back to the facts of the matter here. Statistics Canada said something very alarming this past week, and I'll repeat it for you: Ontario's wages actually went down by 1.3% compared to last year. In fact, only Ontario and Nova Scotia, of all the provinces, saw their pay packets decrease. Families are struggling to make ends meet, Minister, but you're seeing public sector agreements that are way out of line with what families are able to pay.

So let me appeal to your sense of fairness. Since every dollar the government spends was earned by a hard-working taxpayer, if they're actually seeing less in their pockets, isn't it just fair and reasonable to have a public sector wage freeze to help us balance the books in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hard-working doctors in this province, the hard-working teachers, the hard-working public servants who are employed throughout Ontario and spending their wages in our communities. In many of our communities, the public and broader public sectors remain the largest employers.

I won't participate in the exercise the member opposite wants to, and that is to scapegoat public servants and others as a result of the current economic situation.

Mr. Speaker, we will be continuing to move forward as we plan for the next budget. I look forward to the input of the official opposition and the third party, but I think what is important is that we all need to work together. To that extent, I would agree with the member opposite. We are all going to have difficult choices to make, and I look forward, as we move forward, to working together with all Ontarians.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier on the same topic of the necessity of a public sector wage freeze—as other provinces have brought in, as President Obama has brought in for his national government workers, as Prime Minister Cameron has brought in to the United Kingdom. Certainly, as a son of teachers, I'm proud to say that we appreciate the hard work of our public servants in the province of Ontario. But it seems, though, Speaker, that when it comes to the McGuinty Liberals, they only seem to appreciate the members of the Working Families Coalition, who spent some \$9 million in negative attack ads. I guess that's the quid pro quo; that's the "I rub your back, you'll rub mine."

But if you truly don't want to divide Ontarians, if you truly feel like you should treat everybody equally, then let me ask you again: If you believe in this principle of equality, why do you have one policy for non-union workers and a completely different policy for union

workers? Shouldn't it be the same? Minister, won't you do the right thing and bring in a public sector wage freeze to ensure we get spending under control?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, we will continue to make the choices that are important to move Ontario forward. I'm glad to hear the leader of the third party acknowledge his support for our teachers—and I take it now that they're advocating a wage freeze for both the public and broader public sectors, which they have conveniently not been clear about in this discussion to date.

There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, there are difficult choices. We've made some over the last few years. It wasn't easy. When we were called upon by the IMF to invest 2% to 3% of GDP into stimulus at the time of the downturn. Those weren't easy choices. It wasn't easy when we decided to move forward with our tax plan for jobs and growth, which is being hailed right across the country in terms of its effectiveness in making us an efficient tax jurisdiction. We'll continue to work together with all Ontarians, Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, the Acting Premier says that they need to make difficult choices. The problem is, among the choices you continue to pick “none of the above.” That's why we're now in a \$16-billion hole this year, a deeper hole than we were in last year, and Premier McGuinty will actually double the size of the debt in the province of Ontario in his term of office. That means every dollar we pay to debt interest could have been money to go to health care, it could have been money to help in the classroom, it could have been money to invest in roads and bridges, but now it's going increasingly into interest on the debt. You have to start saying no, once in a while. You have to draw the line somewhere, and you have to make decisions based on an essential principle of fairness.

Minister, if families in the private sector have seen their wages decline, if seniors and retirees are basically seeing their pensions frozen, isn't it fair and reasonable to ensure that public sector wages are similarly frozen so we can get the books back in balance in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When this government moved to reduce the price of generic drugs, that leader and his party sided with the big drug companies. That was half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have continued to make the right choices. We want to make sure that as we move forward and we get back to balance, we create a more efficient and fair broader public sector. These are difficult choices. When given a chance, that leader—his party—chose the big drug companies and rejected Ontario's citizens. We stand with the people of Ontario, not the big drug companies.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: At a time when we have a serious debt crisis in the province of Ontario, Ontario families

expect a serious answer and a serious plan from the Minister of Finance, not the silly answer he just gave there, Speaker.

It's a very straight proposition. StatsCanada sadly reports that Ontario saw its wages decline last year. The province had always been the engine of Confederation; the best place, actually, to get a good job and raise your family. Under this government, we're one of only two provinces that have gone backward. We need to fix that. We need good private sector jobs in our province, but we also need to catch up, to get the books back in order; otherwise, future services will be jeopardized.

So, Minister, at a time when families have had to cut back and seniors have had to make do on fixed incomes, why are you giving big increases to the unions that financed your campaign? Isn't it time to bring in a public sector wage freeze across the board that's fair and reasonable?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House think the generic drug policy and access to generic drugs at a reasonable price is a very serious issue. I shouldn't be surprised at that callous comment the Leader of the Opposition made.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have taken decisive steps to move forward. What I can tell the Leader of the Opposition is, there is more work to be done, not just in this budget but over the next five years as we move back to balance, and as we retool the public and broader public sectors to better serve people, but most importantly to preserve access to the best health care and education systems in the world.

I am proud that every credit rating agency has maintained our credit rating through this downturn. I'm proud of what Forbes magazine and others have said about the competitiveness. Most of all, I'm proud to be an Ontarian, proud of the strength of our economy and proud of our leading role in the Canadian economy.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. What kind of message does paying Don Drummond \$1,500 a day send to families and public service workers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we engaged Mr. Drummond last spring to give us good advice. We see this expenditure as an important investment. We think it makes good sense to get that kind of advice from somebody who has had experience in the private sector and experience in the public sector as a former senior official at the federal Department of Finance. At the end of the day, we think that's money well spent. We think it's important to have that kind of advice.

There are three other members of that commission, all from the Ontario broader public sector, who are providing not only good advice to the government but to the Legislature as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Fifteen hundred dollars a day is eight times the pay of an average worker in this province and nearly 20 times the pay of somebody who is making minimum wage. How can the Deputy Premier expect everyday people to believe this province is actually in tough times when he's cutting huge cheques to the very person who's drawing up the plans for the belt-tightening?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I read the leader's comments earlier today so I did a little bit of research and found out that her office and party operation cost the taxpayers \$2,700 a day. I think your supporters think that's money that's well spent.

You may want to make fun of Mr. Drummond, you may not want to invite good advice, but when you look at those kinds of numbers, everything's got to be kept in its proper perspective. We welcome Mr. Drummond's work. He's being appropriately compensated for the work. That work will help inform the decisions that this Legislature takes moving forward.

I would invite the leader of the third party to take his advice seriously. There will be things I'm sure she doesn't support. Hopefully some things she will. We look forward to receiving the report of the commission. It could turn out to be one of the most important commissions ever engaged by this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hospital CEOs or consultants leading a commission can rest easy that their pay and bonuses are going to be secure. And of course, Bay Street bankers know that their corporate tax giveaways aren't going anywhere.

Why is it that the only people being asked to make sacrifices are those who can least afford them right now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased on November 17 when the leader of the third party said, "My meeting with Mr. Drummond, I found it a very productive conversation." I would invite her to work with us. I mean, you can take these numbers and manipulate them to make it look like nobody's hurting more than the people she pretends to speak to.

Mr. Drummond's work is important. The people who are giving us advice, all three other members of the commission, are people who are thoughtful, who understand the importance of the work we're doing.

I look forward to her continuing to engage in this conversation. I think the money is well spent. I look forward to the commission report, I look forward to a legislative committee responding to it, and I hope we'll be able to find some areas where we can agree to move forward together.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The Premier is in London today making

new promises about jobs. Can the Acting Premier tell us what happened to the \$7 million the government gave to Global Sticks Inc.?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Economic Development and Research.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I assume this is going to be an ongoing tirade we're going to hear from the leader of the third party every couple of weeks when a company has some challenges, a company that we may have had some involvement with in terms of trying to help them create jobs.

The fact is, the dollars we invest, whether it be in research and innovation companies, whether it be in some of our regional economic development funds, whether it be in some of our funds to try to attract investment to Ontario—some of those companies may not fare that well. The majority of those companies fare very well; the majority of those companies create jobs.

It takes a little bit of courage for a government to make these kinds of investments, but we're going to stand up for Ontario companies. We're going to stand by the job creation that's being created.

My question for the leader of the third party is, does she have the intestinal fortitude to support these kinds of investments?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, with very much fanfare the government gave Global Sticks \$7 million in grants and promised 130 permanent jobs. Instead, it closed its doors and some of the workers are saying they haven't even been paid. Navistar in Chatham received a grant of over \$30 million, only to shed 1,000 jobs away. Silicon Knights in St. Catharines received a grant of \$2.5 million and just slashed their workforce by half.

Why is it that money that's supposed to be creating jobs is getting handed to companies that are laying people off?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Judging by that question, I can see what the NDP strategy for job creation is in this province and it's to do nothing—just leave those companies hanging out to dry, just leave the workers and the potential to work in partnership with the private sector, to build jobs in this province—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid:—just leave them out there unemployed.

We're not going to do that. We're investing in the fundamentals to build a strong economy. That includes partnerships with private sector companies to build up our economic prospects to create jobs; it includes building a strong education system; it includes investing in infrastructure; it includes investing in a competitive tax environment.

What we're doing in this province is investing in the fundamentals to build a strong economy. It's obvious the NDP aren't up to that job. Mr. Speaker. We're determined to get that job done.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier's very, very good at promising jobs and he's even better at handing money away with no strings attached, but the only people who seem to have a job guarantee around here are the people who are paid to set up the photo ops for the Premier as he travels the province.

What job guarantees are being demanded in exchange for the millions that this government is giving away?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm really pleased to be able to share with the leader of the third party that the Premier is in London today making a very important announcement, because southwestern Ontario—particularly London, but southwestern Ontario in general—has had some challenging times. The Premier is there to tell the people of southwestern Ontario, the workers of southwestern Ontario, that we're going to stand with them, because as our economy improves here throughout Ontario, we want to make sure that southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario are benefiting from that growth. There is not a part in this province that we don't care about.

So I'll be looking to the leader of the third party to see if she really cares about workers in the coming weeks; to see if she's going to support our efforts to help grow the economy in southwestern Ontario, to help grow the economy in eastern Ontario, to continue to invest in our projects that are growing the economy in northern Ontario and to help invest in workers and jobs right across this province.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier a question but he doesn't seem to think it's necessary to be here—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does know better, and I would ask all members to remember that we do not do that here in the House—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, sorry.

I would wish that everyone would abide by that long-standing tradition that we do not mention anyone's absence, because sometimes it may back up and bite you. I would respectfully request also that when somebody does ask a question, you use your inside voices.

The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance.

During the recent recession, families and businesses all took a hit. They dealt with layoffs, they dealt with lower pay, they dealt with anxiety about their future—they still are. In other words, the private sector made sacrifices and difficult choices to make it through these turbulent times. Minister, is it not fair and is it not reasonable to ask government workers to do the same and forgo a raise this time around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, in fact, the broader public sector has been reduced in size. Wage settlements relative to the private sector are actually now lower in collective bargaining environments.

There's no question that many people have had to deal with the consequences of the downturn. That's why we're focused on job creation. That's why we are focused on getting back to balance and why we're focused on making sure that government provides programs and services more efficiently and effectively.

We took the first steps in our 2010 budget; we did more in the 2011 budget. I say to the member opposite and his colleagues: We will be moving forward again in the next budget. I look forward to his input and I look forward to the input of the caucus opposite, as well as of the Drummond commission and, indeed, of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, all we're asking for is that government employees do what the private sector has done: to recognize the \$16-billion deficit we're facing and temporarily forgo getting another raise.

Unless strong action is taken on the deficit, all of the things we truly need and value, like health care and education, will be put at risk, and you know this. That's why we think it is fair and reasonable to ask government workers to forgo a raise. Why will you not do the same?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, in the public and broader public sectors we've seen reductions in the number of employees. We've seen the rates of settlement come down quite dramatically.

1100

The member opposite is right: We did freeze the non-bargained sector. There will need to be more things done, I suspect, as we move into the future. We are committed to doing that with the ultimate goal of protecting and enhancing those vital public services that are so important to all Ontarians: education and health care.

We've created, I think, the most efficient, effective tax system in North America. We need to do the same thing on the expenditure side, because we, on this side of the House, are absolutely dedicated to ensuring that the gains we've made in education and health care since that party was thrown out of office aren't lost as a result of bad decisions made in haste.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: The Toronto Transit Commission is proposing to reduce services to over 60 streetcar and bus routes, starting in January, while hiking fares by another 10 cents. Service cuts will hit some of Toronto's busiest routes, including the Dufferin bus and the Queen streetcar.

Will the minister work with Toronto to find a way to prevent these cuts, or will she stand by while transit users pay more and wait longer for buses and streetcars in our city?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Welcome to the Legislature. It's great to have you here.

I just want to say that what we will do is we will continue to invest billions of dollars building transit in Toronto. We are going to continue to complete the air-rail link from Pearson to Union Station. We are going to invest in the Eglinton-Scarborough cross-town line. That is under way right now. And we are going to complete the extension of the Spadina expressway up into York region by 2015.

The investments in transit in Toronto are unprecedented. More funding, more capital dollars have gone into Toronto to build transit now than for a generation. I think the member opposite needs to understand that members of your party have stood in opposition to those investments over and over and over again, which is a travesty, really, coming from the NDP. So we will continue—

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Everyone loses when public transit service is cut. Riders wait longer, traffic is worse for motorists and children and seniors breathe more pollution.

Speaker, the provincial government used to fund half of the operating costs for the TTC, and today its support has dropped to one third of that level. Why won't the ministry commit to work with the city of Toronto and to find a joint solution to avoid these harmful transit cuts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think, Mr. Speaker—the city of Toronto is going to work out its budget issues. We are going to watch that budget process unfold.

But the credibility gap between what this party has advocated for, in terms of keeping more cars on the road, not taking cars off the road, not investing in transit, not putting people in trains, not making sure that people can get out of their cars and get into transit—because the reality is, the city of Toronto would never have been able to invest in those transit builds if the province hadn't stepped up to the plate.

I fully expected when we did that that the NDP would be there with us, shoulder to shoulder, supporting those investments. To my surprise, they were not there. As a Toronto citizen, it shocks me that they were not more supportive of those investments.

So, we're going to continue those builds. We're going to make sure that there is more transit in Toronto so people in Toronto can get out of their cars and get on transit, in spite of what the NDP—

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

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Speaker, as you know, Ottawa Centre is home to many new immigrants. We, in my community, are very proud to welcome people from all different parts of the world, who contribute both economically and socially to our community.

Speaker, I can tell you as an immigrant myself that it is a daunting challenge for newcomers to integrate eco-

nomically and socially in our communities, and we have to collectively do our utmost best to ensure that our newcomers get the opportunities that they so much deserve, so that they can benefit our communities.

Many settlement agencies in my riding of Ottawa Centre do excellent work in providing front-line services for those communities. We were really concerned when we saw the federal government cutting \$31 million unilaterally from Ontario. I want to know from the minister how it's going to affect Ontarians.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre for the question. He has been a real champion for newcomers, and we appreciate all you've done.

For the second year in a row, the federal government is cutting funding to Ontario's newcomers. This decrease of \$31 million will hit newcomers in this province especially hard at a time when many of them are looking for work. As a result, tens of thousands of new Ontarians will lose access to the vital services they need to succeed and contribute to our economy.

The federal government has cut Ontario's settlement funding by over \$75 million in the last two years. These cuts also come in the wake of not living up to their promised funding under the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which shortchanges Ontario's newcomers by over \$200 million.

Ontario remains the number one destination for immigrants coming to Canada. We take 42% of immigrants and make up only 39% of the population. These unfair cut will deny thousands of newcomers access to services—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Through you, Speaker, thanks to the minister for the answer.

These cuts in funding are going to significantly impact agencies like the Catholic Immigration Centre, OCISO, and many more in my community of Ottawa and Ottawa Centre tremendously. It's going to impact our newcomers, and it's going to deny them opportunities, especially in these tough economic times.

Speaker, what we need is a stable, sustainable agreement from the federal government with the province of Ontario so that we can continue to provide these very important settlement services for our newcomers. Newcomers who come to Ontario deserve equal treatment from the federal government.

Minister, if a new agreement is so critical to the integration and success of our newcomers, what is the status of negotiating a new agreement with the federal government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I absolutely agree with the member. The bottom line is that the federal government needs to come to the table to negotiate a new agreement. We need a fair deal like that which they have with BC, Manitoba and Quebec.

More than 40% of all immigrants to Canada choose Ontario as their home, and thousands more want to come to this province, but federal selection programs don't

respond to Ontario's labour market needs. We need the federal government to maintain current funding levels in order to make sure new immigrants can find good-paying jobs in Ontario.

Immigration is a shared responsibility, and the federal government is not living up to its commitments. Thousands of people destined for Ontario are stuck in huge application backlogs that force many to wait as much as seven years before they can set foot in our province. We cannot continue to allow the federal government to unilaterally determine such an important part of Ontario's economic recovery and its economic future.

Immigrants are—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier. This past weekend we learned that 11 employees of Ontario Power Generation's Pickering plant were fired for alleged violations of the company's code of conduct. However, OPG has refused to disclose the nature of the alleged offences, only saying the firings were a result of the potential violation of the code of conduct.

Speaker, the code covers ethical business practices, conflicts of interest and managing sensitive information of the nuclear power plant.

Deputy Premier, will you lift the shroud of secrecy that seems to prevail in your government and press OPG to reveal the nature of the violation that resulted in this mass dismissal?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the situation is a human relations matter; it may still be subject to litigation.

What I can say is this: that the employees were found in breach of the code of conduct; the member has already described what those breaches were. I am assured that in no way was this related to safety at all. These matters are being appropriately dealt with by the staff and board at Ontario Power Generation. Beyond being able to assure the member that no safety issues were involved, because of the potential for litigation, it would not be appropriate to comment beyond that at this point in time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, first we're not allowed to know the cost of the Oakville power plant, then we're kept in the dark about the cost to cancel the Mississauga power plant, and now the public isn't being told the whole story about the mass firing of employees at the Pickering nuclear plant. Certainly, any conduct that would result in dismissal at a nuclear facility is of grave concern to the public, and they have a right to know.

1110

Deputy Premier, when are you going to change this culture of secrecy that prevails in your government and give Ontarians the information they have a right to know regarding these violations?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member is new, Mr. Speaker, but let me remind him about a little history of transparency at Ontario Power Generation. The government that preceded us refused to make OPG subject to freedom of information. When we did that, we found out a lot of really interesting things—untendered contracts and hundreds of thousands of dollars going to former staff members of the government of the day. There were all kinds of hidden things. They had booths at the Air Canada Centre—it was appalling.

I'm glad we brought freedom of information to OPG and Hydro One. I even remember that the former CEO of Hydro One, under their government, had a yacht.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can't recall what it was called.

We brought freedom of information. I can assure the people of Ontario that the code covers a wide range of staff behaviour—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier. The slowdown has hit London hard—some 25 now out of work and an unemployment rate over 9%, well above the provincial average. Windsor's unemployment rate is back over 10%.

Today, the Premier is unveiling a new economic development fund. How can—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Here's my question: How can families in London, Windsor and the region be sure that this is about creating and protecting jobs over the long run and not just another McGuinty-style photo op?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that the Premier of Ontario is in London today and I'm proud that my colleague will be introducing legislation later this week. I look forward to your support.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker: The member's leader got up a couple of questions ago and asked us why we were helping companies. Now, she's getting up and saying we should be helping companies. There's no question that some of those investments don't work out, no question about that. But I think of Ford, Chrysler and General Motors in my community that benefited from this government's help and the federal government's help. Your party did not support that.

We'll continue to work with London, with Windsor, with rural southwestern Ontario and with Kitchener-Waterloo to help transition back to a prosperous and growing economy. That's what we've been doing, that's our obligation as a government, and I'm glad to hear you're going to support the bill when it's introduced later this week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This government has a bad track record on this file. When the forestry sector

was in trouble up north they announced \$500 million in assistance, but they left half of it in the bank account. In the southwest, Navistar took millions of dollars from the province, but it shut its doors and headed to the States.

Will the minister assure southwestern Ontario families that any funding announcements will come with long-term job guarantees?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can say to the member opposite is I look forward to her voting in favour of the bill that will create the southwestern Ontario economic development corporation.

I can also tell her that I'm proud of the work our members have done throughout the southwest in helping the auto sector come back, Mr. Speaker. It has not been easy; I agree. My community led unemployment in this country for a very long time, but it is coming back. It's coming back in part because we stepped up to the plate with Chrysler and with General Motors. It's coming back because we stepped up with the auto parts manufacturers. It's coming back because we've reduced the taxes on these companies that hire people so that we can have a more competitive tax system.

I'm delighted the NDP is supporting our initiative. We look forward to their vote later this week—

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

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, I know that Ontario has a world-class education system, I know that this government has made unprecedented investments in the future of the province by focusing on strong schools, and today we learned that our kids are leading the country in math, reading and science. But, Minister, not all Ontario kids have access to the same education. There have been recent media reports which detail the poor state of education for many First Nations students, and this is not a new issue. The problems are chronic and the problems are complex.

I'm sure we all agree that every Ontario kid deserves access to the same learning experience. Minister, can you tell the House what you're doing to make sure that First Nations kids—

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, and I want to thank the member for Guelph for her advocacy in ensuring that Ontario schools are inclusive and to help us in the work that we've done to ensure all of our students succeed.

Mr. Speaker, I had a chance, a week or so ago, to go to an amazing conference called Circle of Light. At that conference we talked about the province's aboriginal education, which includes support for our First Nations junior and senior alternative school, where we've worked with the OFIFC to ensure that native friendship centres can offer some really amazing alternative education.

We've integrated First Nations content into the curriculum, with consultation far and wide across the province. We've increased targeted funding as well.

But Speaker, the issue remains that we can do our part in the province, but the federal government has responsibility for schools that are on-reserve. And so I stand very much in support of my Premier, who's asking for a first ministers' meeting when it comes to aboriginal education. Speaker, we are prepared to do our part, but—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister. You spoke about federal funding for reserve schools. Speaker, it has recently been reported in the media that the federal government funds aboriginal students on-reserve at least \$2,000 to \$3,000 less per student than Ontario funds students attending schools off-reserve. This is a situation that fundamentally disadvantages First Nation youth who attend reserve schools. To quote the Premier, "We have a moral obligation to ensure that every child growing up in this province has all the opportunities they need..."

Speaker, through you to the minister, what are the impediments for ensuring that aboriginal children on-reserve receive the same quality education as the rest of the kids in Ontario?

Interjections.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just acknowledge off the top that there are multiple issues with which we're dealing. I hear the members across the floor talking about housing, and I want to say that there are long-term issues, which is why we have a technical team at Attawapiskat today, looking at and working with the federal technical folks to see what the short-term solutions can be. I'm happy to answer a question on that if it comes.

On the education issue, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the time has come that First Nations and aboriginal folks around the province, the federal government and the province, must work together. We must find a way to close the gap between the funding that's provided for kids on-reserve and the funding off-reserve.

There is also a capital backlog. There are children on reserves in this province who have been waiting for schools for decades. We need the federal government to be at that table, to work with us and live up to their constitutional responsibilities while we work with—

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

HYDRO TRANSMISSION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Your government's speech from the throne made specific reference to the need to strengthen Ontario's economy and create jobs. Why, then, are you allowing a project that would achieve these goals to languish? Failure to complete the Leamington transmission line project is jeopardizing planned greenhouse expansion that will

bring over 1,000 permanent private sector jobs and over 2,000 temporary construction jobs to the town of Leamington. Will the Deputy Premier make a firm commitment today to ensure this project be given the green light to go forward?

1120

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, our government has made unprecedented investments in new transmission, including in the southwestern Ontario region. I'm delighted. Almost two weeks after this issue became known, I've had the opportunity to arrange meetings with the vegetable and greenhouse growers, as well as the town of Leamington. In spite of the fact that we've not heard from the opposition, I think we're going to get this resolved in a very positive way for the people of Leamington, and indeed all of southwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier and I apparently have a different view of handling the issue. I've already met with Mayor John Paterson and his councillors regarding this issue back on November 18, and they have serious concerns about this project moving forward.

Another meeting with the mayor and greenhouse officials is not what the people of Leamington need. What the people of Leamington need is for this project to be completed. The resulting proposed greenhouse expansions will increase sales by an estimated \$158 million annually and allow for the continued growth of this sector. This project will create private sector jobs, increase investment in Ontario and strengthen a domestic industry. So I ask the Deputy Premier: When will the Leamington transmission line project start?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member can't seem to take yes for an answer, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the member that this process started in 2006. Your party opposed spending more money on hydro transmission. You opposed it in southwestern Ontario. The environmental assessment was completed in March 2010. We're now ready to move to construction. Pat Hoy moved that along. He was an effective representative, and that's why it's there.

I say to the member: Thank you for your belated question. Thank you for your belated answer. I look forward to that line being built, because the greenhouse industry is one of the biggest and most interesting, and growing in Ontario. We'll continue to work with them on all fronts, Mr. Speaker.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation. On the morning of Monday, November 7, Jenna Morrison was riding her bike to pick up her five-year-old son Lucas at his school in west Toronto. She never made it.

Ontario needs a new provincial bike strategy to make cycling more safe in this province: The McGuinty government has been developing a strategy, apparently, for

the last 18 months. My question to the minister is: Where is it?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the third party for the question. It's indeed a very serious issue. I know that there have been a number of very serious fatalities in Canadian and Ontario cities over the last several months, including my city of Ottawa. Certainly, the Ontario coroner has indicated that he is intending to investigate further into this particular issue and indeed, there's been a private member's bill that has been introduced by Olivia Chow, the MP from Toronto, dealing with additional specifications for trucks.

A number of the fatalities have occurred as a result of individuals being forced into or under trucks for particular fatalities. So we are taking this issue very, very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to follow the issue.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it seems to me that you're not taking something very, very seriously when over a year ago the draft plan, apparently, was available or was going to be released in months, and now over a year has gone by and we haven't seen it. Some say that strategy was completed, in fact, nine months ago, and is sitting somewhere on a desk. When will the government finally actually show some urgency, show how serious this issue is, and release its strategy and get on with the actions that we can put in place here in Ontario to make cycling more safe for cyclists?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that if you look at the official plan of virtually every community in Ontario, it is very, very strongly advocating additional cycling, and they're building additional infrastructure for cyclists.

There are issues surrounding safety which have to be resolved, and the coroner has indicated that he is going to be looking into that. Quite frankly, as a result of the coroner's action and as a result of Olivia Chow's bill, I have indicated to my senior managers that we're doing a complete review internally.

You might also know that the province funds and does an exceptional job in terms of educating the public and providing resources to municipalities for cycling and cycling safety across the province.

We will continue our investments, we will continue our diligence and we will work closely with the coroner moving forward on this issue, take it seriously—

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, as the Ontario—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. First of all, I didn't acknowledge you, and second of all, I saw somebody starting to move and I was waiting for them to finish standing, so we'll just try to be fair around the clock when we do this.

I am going to recognize the member.

HOSPITALS

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, this question is to the health minister. Last Thursday, a historic motion passed in this House that requires the government to table a 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 hospital expansion projects promised before and during the 2011 Ontario general election. The Liberals voted against keeping their election promises. Will the Minister of Health stand up and tell Ontarians, especially residents of Cambridge and North Dumfries, whether the minister plans to table this detailed report to the Legislature by March 1, 2012?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have to say that I was confused before, and now I'm even more confused. Let me make this very, very clear to the member from Cambridge and to the people of Cambridge: We are proceeding with a Cambridge hospital project and we are excited about it. Speaker, for the life of me, I do not understand why the member opposite is raising fear in his community about whether or not this project is a go. I'm going to be as clear as I can be: We are moving forward with the redevelopment at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

Speaker, this man is from a party that, for years, put the brakes on hospital infrastructure. There were very, very few hospital infrastructure projects under their watch. We, on the other hand, are moving forward on projects across this province, including Cambridge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I understand why the minister is confused, because my motion doesn't ask whether you're going to build the hospital; it asks you to table the plans so that we can hold you accountable, something that you've failed to do. We want to know the timelines, the costs and when the projects are expected to be done. Will the minister stand up in this House today and table a detailed plan so that people know exactly what this government is going to do and when they're going to do it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm going to give the member the benefit of the doubt because he is new to this place. The information is available. It's online. All of the information about the projects is online on the Infrastructure Ontario website.

We are the only party who has released a comprehensive health care strategy. It also requires, Speaker, that we have a competitive process. For us to release how much money we're going to spend on each of these projects will totally sour the competitive procurement approach. We do not release the cost of the projects before we have gone through that competitive procurement.

So there is significant information already online on the Infrastructure Ontario website, but we will not release the price tag, Speaker, because that would—

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

As I indicated to you from the very beginning, I will make mistakes. I made one today. I lost the rotation from

the NDP. When the leader of the third party asked the last question, I went over to the Conservatives. I made a mistake. I should have gone over to this rotation, so I will now return to the Liberals.

1130

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order—I'd ask you to stop the clock, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's clear that the member did not get up in time. You had recognized the member from the Conservative Party. That's issue number one.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let me make my point of order.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a very short point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are two or three points to it.

First of all, you had recognized the Conservative member for the question. That means the next question has to go by rotation. If not, you skip us and we end up losing out on the question because the rotation will go back to the Conservatives.

The decision was made to go with the Conservative member. It is our question at this point, otherwise we are the ones losing the question, and that is not the way this should work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I would agree. I appreciate the fact that you admitted the mistake. Our honourable member did get up first, so he did the right thing. But in fairness to the NDP, to the third party, I agree with the NDP House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So here's how it's going to play: The member was actually standing. I didn't acknowledge him, and he continued his question. I acknowledged the member, so I thought I'd better finish that, come back to this member, and I will go immediately to the NDP.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Investing in Ontario's students is the best way to ensure that our province builds long-term prosperity for Ontario families. This is absolutely the right choice for Ontario's future.

Tradespeople are an important part of Ontario's plan for growth. Here in Ontario, we need skilled people who will build facilities for our aging boomers. It is not just enough to speak about training more skilled doctors and nurses. Tradespeople are the foundation to our society. Innovative ideas can only be implemented with trade talents and skills that we groom in the people of Ontario. We can only compete with the world to build better tools, good machines and efficient buildings if we have the right mix of talent.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: How is the minister going to make sure that we continue to encourage students in our province to join apprenticeship programs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to congratulate my friend on his election. We are very, very lucky to have someone with such a lifetime of commitment to the field of education in this House.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003, we've added 120,000 apprenticeship seats. This year, we are on track for 29,000. That is twice the rate of apprenticeship creation of previous governments, which is an extraordinary accomplishment in itself. We have given \$12 million to colleges and \$2 million to non-college training agencies for infrastructure, equipment and modernization to help them further accelerate apprenticeship creation in the province of Ontario.

We have an apprenticeship system that is responsive to current and emerging labour markets, and at our rate of growth, we are on track to meet and exceed the labour market shortfalls that have been projected, which is—

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, our future generations need to understand the importance of skilled tradespeople. We need to teach our children that working in the trades really means that they are in a great job. We need builders who can build Ontario's next best idea.

It is great to hear that our government is crafting opportunities for Ontario's apprenticeships while boldly confronting the challenges of this economy. The Leader of the Opposition and his caucus colleagues have repeatedly stood in the way of improving our apprenticeship programs.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: How is the minister going to make sure that the political interests of the parties opposite do not stand in the way of building a bright future for Ontario apprenticeship programs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The party opposite has been talking about apprenticeships and trades for about six months. They maybe should be apologizing because the party opposite reduced funding for apprenticeships by an amazing 73.4%, undermining and setting our apprenticeship and trades programs back decades. They couldn't even generate 15,000 apprenticeships per year and had one of the worst records, and now put out press releases criticizing us. A little humility on the opposite side, Mr. Speaker, would help a lot.

Our partnerships with post-secondary education, business and unions, are creating an aggressive, fair-minded and balanced apprenticeship strategy—

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

CREMATORIUM

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Good morning, Speaker. I'd like to congratulate you formally on your election.

My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, there are strict regulations in place in Europe and in other jurisdictions in Canada regarding the siting of crematoriums, yet in Ontario these guidelines do not exist. In my riding, a new crematorium is being proposed in a high-density residential area in Malton.

My question to the minister is, will you support a review by the chief medical officer of Ontario to offer guidelines on where and how far the setback should be for crematoriums located in Ontario to assist all municipalities in making these guidelines to protect the health and environmental concerns of residents across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Government Services.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sorry, Consumer Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House. I would also like to congratulate the member opposite as well on being in this House.

Certainly, we are aware, as a government, of the need for crematoriums in the province. The diversity of our province reflects this need. New legislation will allow us to locate crematoriums off cemetery lands. This legislation will take effect on July 1, 2012.

We are certainly very much aware that the Chief Medical Officer of Health is a respected expert in our province, and we are open to any advice or study from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again, I ask the Minister to commit to having an independent assessment conducted by the chief medical officer of Ontario to ascertain whether or not there are health concerns and environmental impacts, and if there are, whether or not the government can take leadership on this issue to ensure that the concerns—and the health concerns particularly—of the residents of Ontario are protected.

We need the government to take leadership on this issue instead of downloading the decision-making on municipalities. Will you commit to an independent review by the chief medical officer?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: The municipal approval process involves notice to the public, and the decision of the municipality may be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. Establishing a crematorium requires a director's certificate of approval issued by the Ministry of the Environment. Evidence of municipal approval and approval from the Ministry of the Environment must be provided to the registrar of cemeteries before an application for a licence to operate the crematorium will be considered.

The Ontario government is committed to ensuring that laws affecting burial practices are respectful of Ontario's

cultural diversity while also preserving our environment and protecting the health of Ontarians.

Again, I would say to the member that I can assure him that we are open to any advice or study from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and we will continue to understand the needs for us to be respectful of the concerns of area residents.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This morning during question period, Minister Duncan claimed that the credit rating agencies have maintained Ontario's credit ratings throughout this downturn, which is inaccurate. Two credit ratings agencies have recently—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, for a correction of the record, because the member knows that only members can correct their own record. Thank you.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The same one or another one?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Another one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Another point of order, member for—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you very much.

Speaker, today in the House I heard a number of questions, particularly one to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, from two members. If I look in O'Brien and Bosc, in tabling questions—and I want to just get my glasses so I read it correctly, Mr. Speaker—they should be:

“—brief;

“—seek information; and

“—ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the individual minister addressed.

“Furthermore,” they should not:

“—be a statement, representation, argument, or an expression of opinion;

“—be hypothetical;

“—seek an opinion, either legal or otherwise.”

Speaker, I would put it to you that the matters that were brought up by the members of the government for their minister were well outside the bounds of the administrative capabilities not only of this minister but of this House. Federal decisions are not debatable in this House. We cannot change—we do not run the federal Parliament, and those kinds of questions should be ruled out of order as they're nothing more than posturing. If they wish to discuss federal policy, then they should be discussing it with their federal Parliament, not in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. Indeed, it is a point of order. I would also like to take this moment to remind all members that questions and answers are supposedly related to the direct business of this House.

That brings me up to my second point, other than what you've just said, and that is, we would all help ourselves if you direct the questions to the Speaker and your answers to the Speaker. That's a time-tested process to bring the temperature down. So if you remember to ask the question to the Speaker and give your answer to the Speaker, that would be very helpful.

I thank the member for his point of order, and I remind the members to keep that in mind when they do pose their questions and when they give their answers.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are just a couple of items I wanted to cover.

First of all, I apologize to our guests, because I missed somebody: on behalf of the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, Hildegard and Werner Kinder, grandparents of Pickering–Scarborough East page Madeline Braney.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Cambridge has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning the hospital expansion projects. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

If there are no further—

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just to correct the record here. On my original point of order, all I was seeking was a correction of the record on facts stated by the minister, so I believe that is a legitimate point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've already ruled on that. You can only correct your own statements in this House.

This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce my guests this afternoon: my aunt and uncle, Sharon Aylsworth and John Barr; my brother, Joe Yurek; and my parents, Ed and Mary Yurek, coming down from St. Thomas.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to introduce one of my constituency assistants from Kingston and the Islands, Lana Asal and her husband, Peter Knaack, who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A most hearty welcome.

Ms. Soo Wong: Today, I would like to acknowledge the Terry Fox Public School junior choir, who, as many of you heard earlier in our corridor, sang a moving tribute in honour of our veterans and wonderful Christmas carols.

Located in my riding, Terry Fox Public School has a strong history of building a positive learning environment for students. Believing in the three As of education—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction only.

Ms. Soo Wong: All right. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome them here to the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHICKEN INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to recognize the contribution of our chicken industry in Ontario to our provincial economy.

Ontario is the largest producer and processor of chicken in Canada, responsible for approximately one third of all Canadian chicken production. We have over 1,000 chicken farmers and 19 commercial processing facilities. The Ontario chicken industry directly employs 5,000 Ontarians and many more indirectly in the transportation, food service and retail sectors. This industry is valued at over \$630 million at the farm gate.

Today, Team Ontario—the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors—are here to update us on the state of the industry. The chicken farmers and processors launched the Team Ontario concept last year, and it's working well.

I want to commend them for working together to strengthen the industry to ensure a great supply of quality chicken for Ontario. Together they have made progress in improving the allocation system and trying to ensure that the Ontario chicken industry can grow and prosper.

I want to thank the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors for coming to Queen's Park. Tim Hudak and I look forward to meeting with them this afternoon to reaffirm our commitment to supply management or orderly marketing and to hear more about their plans to continue to strengthen the industry.

I hope that all members will take the time and opportunity to learn about these plans and enjoy great Ontario chicken this evening in the legislative dining room.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Ms. Cindy Forster: MaryJane Huneault is a tenant of Canal View Homes, a non-profit housing development in Welland, which after 20 years recently lost the funding for its entire supportive housing program.

Before moving there, Mary Jane was in a cycle of homelessness with mental health issues, leading to

frequent hospital admissions and inability to pay her bills.

In 2011, Canal View Homes lost \$135,000 in funding compared to 2009. The caseworkers who supported at least 30 tenants at a cost of only \$12 per day per tenant were terminated. The Niagara region is underfunded and underserved for mental health and homelessness services.

Speaker, these are real people who need dependable, continuous social service support. Programs that are working and have proven track records of reducing hospital admissions, reducing shelter admissions and reducing police and ambulance visits should not be tendered like snow removal contracts.

As a resident of Canal View with access to caseworker support, MaryJane has not had a hospital admission in 17 years. She budgets her money. She pays her bills. She has food all month. Residents like MaryJane, though, were able to call upon their counsellors from day to day to manage their anxiety and challenges. Support like this has kept her healthy and off the streets. What happens to her now with the service cuts?

Minister of Municipal Affairs, your government must reinstate this much-needed funding to save lives and for our vulnerable citizens.

TERRY FOX PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms. Soo Wong: Today, I would like to acknowledge the Terry Fox Public School's junior choir—they're sitting up there—who, as many of you heard earlier in our corridor, sang a moving tribute in honour of our veterans and wonderful Christmas carols.

Located in my riding, the Terry Fox Public School has a strong history of building a positive learning environment for students. Believing in the three As of education, the school encourages students to excel academically, athletically and artistically. The students participate in co-curricular sports teams, house leagues and ski trips. Their enthusiastic staff encourages their students to be involved in choir, strings and band, and clubs, including Young Women on the Move and the robotics clubs.

Last year, the junior choir participated in a choral project which allowed the students to practise with the composers from the Toronto Children's Chorus.

Most importantly, the Terry Fox Public School believes its students should be involved in improving their community. Since 1986, their students have consistently raised funds for the Terry Fox Walkathon. Their school is also recognized as a certified gold ecoschool.

During his life, Terry Fox was a strong and determined individual. It is great to see the Terry Fox Public School live up to his legacy.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Bill Walker: As a newly elected MPP, I am obligated to say that I am neither surprised nor shocked by the political gamesmanship that plays out daily on all sides of this House. However, I am frustrated by the lack

of courage and compassion manifested by the opposite side of the House.

To me, one of the most disappointing attributes of this government is its appetite for secrecy—a government that keeps doors closed on openness, transparency and accountability; a government that denies the public any opportunity to be heard.

If it wasn't so, this government wouldn't be making a unilateral decision, without any proof, justification or dialogue, to shut down the jails in Owen Sound, Walkerton and Sarnia, and ultimately take 200 jobs and a combined payroll of \$6 million out of Bruce and Grey.

Since day one, I've been calling on the responsible minister to do the right thing: to reverse her decision, pending a full public review, and to consult with the local stakeholders who would be adversely impacted by the closures. A decision of this magnitude that will affect 200 families must involve public input and must not be made as part of a quiet process among insiders.

The bottom line is, if this government doesn't clean up its act and move to strengthen the tenets of democracy, like transparency and openness, their members will be sitting on this side of House by the end of the next provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, I again challenge this government and its minister to show integrity. Call off the jail closures now.

OCULARISTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Darren Hall, and his uncle before him, are ocularists. They have been coming to Sudbury for 33 years. Ocularists are the health specialists who make prosthetic eyes.

Many people in northeastern Ontario have lost an eye and need their services. That includes my 91-year-old father-in-law, who lost his eye in a mining accident years ago. That includes Maria Bordignon, one of the constituents in my riding, and hundreds more that need prosthetic eyes.

The government says that it's looking for ways to save money. Well, here's one: Pay your bills on time. The Assistive Devices program is so brutally slow, even with the new system, in making payments that Mr. Hall, the only ocularist practising in northeastern Ontario, has shut his doors on Sudbury clinics. Mr. Hall is fed up with waiting months and months for payments that are owed to him by the ADP. Now hundreds of people from northeastern Ontario must travel to Toronto, costing the Northern Health Travel Grant tens of thousands of dollars in travel and hotel costs.

The government says that it wants to balance its budget. Pay your bills on time. What we have now, Mr. Speaker, is a lose-lose-lose: a loss of services to northerners, a frustrated ocularist and hefty Northern Health Travel Grant bills.

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This is not new. The NDP has raised the issue of late payment by ADP a number of times. Now, Mr. McGuinty, will you listen to a good idea that saves money and improves services?

MARLIES KLEKNER-ALT

M. Phil McNeely: C'est un honneur pour moi de souligner l'excellence et le talent d'une athlète de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans. Marlies Klekner-Alt, âgée de 17 ans et élève de 12^e année à l'École secondaire publique Louis-Riel d'Orléans, a reçu le prix prestigieux Helena Harbridge 2011, décerné par l'Association canadienne de golf junior.

Depuis 2006, le prix reconnaît l'esprit sportif, le dévouement et la contribution au golf d'une joueuse membre de l'Association canadienne de golf junior. Cette récompense est d'ailleurs nommée à la mémoire et aussi à l'image de la joueuse Helena Harbridge, décédée en 2006 lors de sa première année à l'université West Georgia.

Comme le mentionnait d'ailleurs la récipiendaire aux médias, « Ce prix est important pour moi car il fait la démonstration que le travail acharné et l'effort portent fruit ».

Marlies Klekner-Alt rejoindra sa soeur aînée sur l'équipe de golf de l'université Newman dès l'automne 2012. Elle est affiliée au Club de Golf Camelot et a été entraînée par Danielle Nadon, qui a d'ailleurs une école de golf à Orléans.

Alors, félicitations à cette grande athlète d'Orléans et tous mes voeux de succès pour une carrière florissante.

J'encourage donc tous les jeunes sportives et sportifs à persévérer et à poursuivre leur rêve.

DOROTHY KEW

Mrs. Jane McKenna: As MPPs, we are justifiably proud of the places we come from; the places we call home. We treasure the history of those places and the ways that our personal stories and those of our families and friends become part of a wonderful tapestry. Without that history and sense of place, we lose an important part of ourselves.

On that note, I rise today to salute the outstanding community work of one of my constituents, Dorothy Kew. Dorothy has just been named a recipient of a 2011 Ontario Senior Achievement Award for her three decades of service to the Mississauga library system, where she has been a passionate promoter of local heritage for over 20 years. She was also a powerful influence on the development and promotion of the groundbreaking Mississauga Historic Images Gallery.

Her dedication to community and family history is truly inspiring, and her story is a reminder of the many ways that Burlington shares its riches with the neighbourhood. Congratulations, Dorothy.

CHICKEN INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to thank representatives for the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and chicken processors here today, working together as Team Ontario to come to Queen's Park to host their annual chicken day.

Our chicken farmers and processors play very important roles in Ontario's agriculture and food processing sectors. With more than 10,000 full-time jobs between the production, processing and direct input segments, the value chain is an economic generator measured in the billions of dollars.

I'm proud Ontario is the home to some of the world's most delicious, safest and most nutritious chicken, and proud to support Ontario's chicken farmers and processors. Nearly 40% of all chicken farms in Canada are located in Ontario, making Ontario the largest producer, processor and consumer of chicken in the country.

We also know that supply management plays an important role in the industry's success. It brings stability to the industry, which is why our government is a strong, committed supporter of this system. I commend Team Ontario for their hard work. The leadership and support that these organizations provide is helping contribute to the future success of our agri-food industry and Ontario's economy.

Our government is proud to support and celebrate the wonderful achievements of the chicken farmers and processors of Ontario and look forward to their continued success. We call on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to defend supply management in any future trade negotiations.

EVELYN MASSON

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, today I rise to recognize one of the great contributors to my riding of Nipissing and congratulate her on being named a recipient of the Ontario Senior Achievement Award.

Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yeah, you can clap.

Evelyn Masson—Evie, as she's known to her family, friends and neighbours—has spent her lifetime volunteering in various capacities, even while working full-time and raising her three children.

Evie has always devoted her time to the betterment of individuals and her community as a whole, and remains committed to doing so today.

She is currently a member of the municipality of Callandar's 125th anniversary committee and is actively involved in local council meetings. She continues to help raise funds for the Christmas cheer fund and the newly established Callander and District Food Bank.

Over the years, she has also given her valuable time to many other community organizations such as the M.T. Davidson School, the Callander museum board, and the Knox United Church board.

Evie has previously been recognized by the Ontario Heritage Foundation for her volunteer work and is a recipient of the Ontario horticultural society's president's award.

I look forward to honouring her when she receives her Ontario Senior Achievement Award in the music room of the office of the Lieutenant Governor on December 14.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the members.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that during the recess between the 39th and the 40th Parliaments, the following documents and papers respecting the Legislative Assembly were tabled:

—on June 14, 2011, the annual energy conservation progress report, 2010, volume 1, *Managing a Complex Energy System*, from the Environmental Commissioner;

—on June 21, 2011, the annual report 2010-11 from the Ombudsman;

—on June 23, 2011, the annual report 2010-11 from the Integrity Commissioner;

—on June 28, 2011, the review of the 2011 pre-election report on Ontario finances from the Auditor General;

—on July 6, 2011, the report concerning Randy Hillier, member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, from the Integrity Commissioner;

—on August 29, 2011, the 2009-10 annual report from the Chief Electoral Officer.

I further beg to inform the House that the Clerk has laid upon the table the roll of members elected at the general election of 2011.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that, in accordance with standing order 117(c), the House leaders have selected in rounds the recognized parties from which the committee chairs shall be drawn.

Chairs shall be drawn from the caucus of the government for the following committees: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; the Standing Committee on Government Agencies; the Standing Committee on General Government; and the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Chairs shall be drawn from the caucus of the official opposition for the following committees: the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly; the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Chairs shall be drawn from the caucus of the third party for the following committees: the Standing Committee on Estimates; the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that "the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pur-

suant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 17, 2011, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Ministry of the Attorney General; Cabinet Office; Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration; Ministry of Community and Social Services; Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; Ministry of Consumer Services; Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Education; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry of Finance; Office of Francophone Affairs; Ministry of Government Services; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport; Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Labour; Office of the Lieutenant Governor; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Ministry of Natural Resources; Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry; Office of the Premier; Ministry of Research and Innovation; Ministry of Revenue; Ministry of Tourism and Culture; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Ministry of Transportation; Office of the Assembly; Office of the Auditor General; Office of the Chief Electoral Officer; and Ombudsman of Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

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Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates 2011-12 of these ministries and offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.

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. Norm Miller: The bill would designate provincial highways that, when they're being rebuilt, it would require that a minimum of one metre of the shoulder of the highway be paved, with benefits of increased safety, improved health for Ontarians and lower maintenance costs for the highway.

LOCAL MUNICIPALITY DEMOCRACY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA DÉMOCRATIE AU SEIN DES MUNICIPALITÉS LOCALES

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to amend the Green Energy Act, 2009 and the Planning Act / Projet de loi 10, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

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. Todd Smith: The Green Energy Act, 2009, as it currently stands, overrides traditional municipal roles in regards to planning, restrictions and bylaws as they would usually pertain to green energy projects. It does that through schedule K of the act, which amends the Planning Act.

The Planning Act is a tool that our municipalities utilize every day in their ability to draft plans, impose restrictions, enforce bylaws and exercise the same basic controls that municipalities would be free to exercise over other major industrial projects.

The Local Municipality Democracy Act, 2011, is a way for the province to right a wrong by changing the amendments made to the Planning Act by the Green Energy Act. By changing the Green Energy Act to give municipalities specific rights to enforce bylaws to protect the health and safety concerns presented by their citizens regarding these projects, we're treating our municipal government as partners in our democracy.

More than 80 municipalities have already passed resolutions asking this Legislature for the restoration of local control for these projects. It's time for us to do as parliamentarians should and represent the expressed views of our constituents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One reminder: We do try to describe the bill—what the content is—and you usually take that from the preamble. If the preamble is long, we would ask you to keep it as short as possible, please, with no comment; just the content of the bill.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding presiding officers.

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

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bas Balkissoon, member for the electoral district of Scarborough–Rouge River, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House; that Ted Arnott, member for the electoral district of Wellington–Halton Hills, be appointed First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House; that Julia Munro, member for the electoral district of York–Simcoe, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House; and that Paul Miller, member for the electoral district of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, be appointed Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

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

“Whereas the Eastern Ontario Development Fund (EODF) was established by the Ontario government as a four-year, \$80-million program to assist businesses in the creation of jobs and investment in new technologies, equipment or skills training;

“Whereas EODF has proven to be a valuable asset to assist eastern Ontario communities hard hit by the economic downturn in their efforts to attract and retain business and industry;

“Whereas during the recent provincial election, Premier Dalton McGuinty expressed a commitment to extend the four-year program beyond its March 2012 expiry date;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation to recognize that the challenges facing businesses and industries in eastern Ontario when the program was created persist, and it is therefore critical for the EODF program to be extended beyond March 2012; and

“Further, that the minister convenes a meeting of eastern Ontario MPPs to seek their input into how the program can be adjusted to better meet its job creation objectives and to ensure it includes the appropriate

accountability measures to protect the investment by taxpayers.”

I’ll affix my signature to the petition, Mr. Speaker, and send it to the table with Prakriti. Thank you.

CREMATORIA

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I’d like to introduce the concerned citizens of Malton who are present here today in the public gallery.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: They’ve taken their time out from their busy schedule to hear this petition. I have in my hand over 1,600 signatures that have been signed from residents in Ontario, primarily from Malton, but across Ontario. I’ll read the petition now.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas strict regulations on emissions of crematoria exist in Europe, and health experts have stated that crematoria should not be located in residential areas due to concerns about emissions of mercury, dioxins and other particulate matter;

“Whereas regulations under the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002, are silent on restrictions and leave municipalities without assistance in determining the health impacts of crematoriums in residential communities;

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

“Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health should immediately conduct a review of crematoriums, studying the health impacts, and make recommendations on minimum setbacks to ensure there are no health risks for neighbouring residential properties. Appropriate guidelines following this review should be included in the regulations coming into effect July 2012. A hold should be placed on the siting of new crematoriums in Ontario in order to protect residents from toxic exposure until the review is conducted and appropriate guidelines are set.”

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

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas municipalities have always had control over planning matters in their communities; and

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“Whereas community consultation and engagement is essential for successful green energy projects; and

“Whereas local residents should be actively involved in all discussions about wind turbine projects in their community;

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

“That the Liberal government return planning power for renewable energy projects to municipalities and local residents....”

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the good people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt.

“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” are being performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask the nice page Prakriti to bring it to the Clerk. We’ll practise the name for the next time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know exactly what you’re saying, member.

Further petitions?

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I’d like to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Walkerton and surrounding areas do not support the closure of the Walkerton Jail; and

“Whereas the local stakeholders in Walkerton have not been consulted regarding this closure; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to release the cost-benefit analysis used to determine that the Walkerton Jail be ordered for closure; and

“Whereas the Auditor General stated in 2008 that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services would be short 2,000 beds by 2011;

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

“That the Liberal government postpone the closure of the Walkerton Jail until the promised local stakeholder consultation has occurred and the cost-benefit analysis has been released.”

I support this petition and I affix my signature to it.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of

hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes.”

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jim Wilson: This petition ties in very well with the private member’s bill that my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings just introduced into the House.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” the McGuinty “Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind and solar power generation facilities without any local say or local approval; and

“Whereas the” Liberal “government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, who are accountable to no one; and

“Whereas the” Liberal “government has removed any kind of appeal process for municipalities or for people living in close proximity to these projects; and

“Whereas” the leader of Her Majesty’s official opposition, the member for Simcoe–Grey “and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

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

“That the McGuinty” Liberal “government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind and solar developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it. Thank you.

WIND TURBINES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Huron.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Brock.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That’s okay; it was close.

“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 over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

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

“Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning.”

I affix my signature to that, Mr. Speaker, as I agree, and I’ll give this to page Yousef.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I have one last petition today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the 200-foot-high CAW industrial wind turbine being built in the middle of Port Elgin residences and cottages does not comply with the provincial law requiring 550-metre setbacks (to preserve people’s health and safety); and

“Whereas it was rejected by the democratically elected municipality and local residents, who were not adequately informed about the project;

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

“To immediately halt construction of the turbine and require it to be moved to a site that does not violate provincial legislation as passed under the Green Energy Act in 2009. We also petition that area residents be adequately informed about the siting and not surprised by sudden construction of a wind turbine.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it, and I’ll ask Christian to deliver it to the table.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township.

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

“Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

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

“That Premier Dalton McGuinty and” his “Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the petition.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Highland Companies, an American company, wants to build a quarry in Melancthon township which is to be bigger than Niagara Falls. It will be the second-largest in North America. It will be built 200 feet below the water table of the headwaters that feed three major rivers. This will contaminate these rivers, which are a freshwater source for over one million people. Furthermore, the land that the quarry will be built on is some of the best farmland in Ontario. Over 50% of the GTA’s potatoes are grown on this soil. The Highland Companies is under no obligation to fill in the quarry when they are finished. There is also no law stating that there must be an environmental assessment on the quarry site before it is built. This quarry will hurt the environment and affect many people, and therefore it must be stopped.

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

“To stop the development of the Melancthon quarry.”

It is signed by literally hundreds of people in my community.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: “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 over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind

development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

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“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils representing two million Ontarians called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place and local democracy is restored;

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

“Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning.”

I sign this petition, support it and I’ll pass it on with Daniel.

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with regard to Bala Falls, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government permitted the release of crown lands to enable the development of a hydro dam in the heart of Bala without discussion or proper consultation with the municipality of the township of Muskoka Lakes, the district of Muskoka or the residents and businesses who would be directly affected; and

“Whereas the community is a tourism destination which is dependent upon Bala Falls as an attraction; and

“Whereas residents and business people alike are deeply concerned about the economic and environmental impact that the construction and operation of the dam will have on the community;

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

“That the McGuinty government and in particular the Minister of Natural Resources reverse the decision to release crown lands for a hydro dam in Bala Falls.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member. The time has now ended for petitions.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for London–Fanshawe, I believe, on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I want to correct my record from this morning’s question period. In my question to the Deputy Premier, I said, “Some 25 now out of work and an unemployment rate over 9%.” I meant to say, “Some 25,000 now out of work.” Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order for correcting the record. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 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): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I will be splitting my time with the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

It is an honour to be standing here today to deliver my maiden speech in this Legislative Assembly. Historically, the maiden speech has provided new members with an opportunity to introduce themselves to their colleagues. Today I would like to tell you about myself, my values, my riding and how they connect with the speech from the throne.

First, I would like to recognize my predecessor, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, who represented the constituency of Scarborough–Agincourt for 24 years. During his tenure he served as the Minister of Citizenship, Minister of Energy and Minister of Government Services. He is respected in my riding, so much so that in the 2003 provincial election, Gerry won his seat by a margin of 61%.

As I begin to represent the constituents of Scarborough–Agincourt, I want to thank Gerry for serving his community and the constituents well. I hope, as a new member for the riding, I can live up to the standard he has set forth.

I also would like to congratulate the member for Brant on his recent election as the Speaker of the House. I know the Speaker will use his past experience as an educator in this House to ensure that we conduct our business in a respectful manner. Every day we are visited by schools, youth groups and choirs. Young people look to us to lead by example. I hope all members here will continue to commit to uphold this obligation.

I want to acknowledge my riding association and executive members who are here today. They’re a dedicated group of individuals who continue to work hard for our community. I also want to thank the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt, who have trusted me to represent them and have expressed their confidence in the Liberal Party’s vision for Ontario.

I also want to thank all the young people who have worked on my campaign, young people like Tharani, Victor, Jenny, George and Akehil. These young people and many others were the lifeblood of my election campaign, and they will be the lifeblood of our province. Together, we got to know the people of Scarborough–Agincourt, their struggles, their challenges, their joys and

their pride. Because of their help and inspiration, when I speak in this House, I speak for all those residents of Scarborough–Agincourt, and it is an honour to do so.

With this in mind, I must pass on a story that I heard many times while knocking on doors and talking with seniors. The seniors in my riding want to live an independent life in their homes for as long as they can. I'm very pleased that our government has taken a leadership role in ensuring our seniors can stay at home through the home renovation tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm an immigrant, a registered nurse and an educator. To my knowledge, I'm the first female Chinese-Canadian MPP in this House. It is because of what I have learned from these experiences that I ran in October's election and why I'm inspired to work for the people in my riding.

I was born in Hong Kong and came to Canada when I was eight years old. My parents faced many challenges, such as learning a new language and adapting to a new way of life. Myself, I had to adapt to a new school system and learn how to make new friends. Yet despite the many challenges our family faced in the early years, we always knew Canada and Ontario would always be the place of our new home.

My parents valued the importance of knowledge, duty, hard work and the need to help others. Hence, my sister, my brother and I have all pursued careers in health care. I'm here today because my parents have pushed me to learn. But I'm also here today because our public school education system provided me with opportunities to learn and to grow. In my high school years, I was the first female student council president and yearbook editor. I also had great high school teachers who encouraged and challenged me with many ideas and thought processes.

During my undergraduate days as a nursing student, I saw the challenges of many vulnerable patients and their families. I learned very early in nursing school of the need to advocate for children, youth, seniors, women and new Canadians. What I learned is that education is a key social determinant of health, for success and, most importantly, for opportunity, and it is an essential element of improving the lives of our new Canadians.

It is with this in mind that I tell you that Scarborough–Agincourt is home of some of the best public schools in Ontario, schools that support many students from Canadian families who are new to this country. Recently the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care joined me in a visit to David Lewis Public School in my riding. Many of the students that attend David Lewis come from parents who are new Canadians. Many of the families face financial challenges, and many of them are learning English as a second language. Yet with the leadership and guidance of the school principal, Karen Peach, who is with us today, David Lewis has been recognized consistently for its students' success. Recently, the school received the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement award for its work in improving students' learning experience.

There are many other great schools just like David Lewis; for example, Agincourt Collegiate Institute, which will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2015. There is Kennedy Public School, which for the past seven years has been recognized and distinguished by the Fraser Institute for excelling in academic performance.

As you can tell, the schools in my riding are working hard to create new opportunities for our young people. It is therefore important that we support them in this endeavour.

For the past eight years this government has understood the need to build strong education systems. As a former school trustee, I have seen the positive results of the investments that have been made in our schools. For example, we know that when kids eat healthy, they have a better learning experience and will therefore have a better chance to succeed. That's why I was very proud to see this government pass the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act.

The throne speech notes that this government will continue to invest in our education system. By 2014, 250,000 Ontario four- and five-year-olds will enrol in full-day kindergarten. Our government is creating 60,000 new spaces in our colleges and universities so an Ontario student who wants to go to college or university can do so. We will keep our post-secondary tuition affordable by reducing the tuition costs by 30% for families making less than \$160,000 a year. With these investments in education, we will ensure students will be a part of the strongest and most educated workforce and will strengthen our economy.

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My riding is not just known for its great schools. In fact, like all the ridings in our great province, my riding has great stories. What began as a farming community later developed as railways were constructed. Now, because of builders like Jean Kennedy Campbell, a matriarch of Scarborough–Agincourt who is here with us today, the riding has developed into a supportive and vibrant community.

My riding is home to many green spaces, such as Agincourt Community Centre, Stephen Leacock Community Centre, L'Amoreaux Community Recreation Centre and the Tam O'Shanter Golf Course. It is home to green eco-schools like the Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute, which was one of the first high schools in Toronto to receive a platinum eco-school certification.

The riding has also great libraries, like Bridlewood library, Agincourt library and Steeles library. Together with local youth, the residents of my riding have created one of the most successful community-based reading programs. On Saturdays, you will find me participating in our reading programs in one of our great libraries.

It is also a riding that looks after itself. For many years, the Agincourt Community Services Association has assisted those most in need by providing the food bank, job fairs and outreach.

Yet, the most important aspect of my riding is its diversity. My riding has young people, seniors, Chinese,

South Asians, Koreans, Japanese, Tamils, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists. Scarborough–Agincourt is also the first home of many new Canadians. That’s what is great about Scarborough–Agincourt. At a time when countries like the United Kingdom and Germany have called multiculturalism a failure, my riding, like so many others in Canada, has shown that we can move forward together to build a strong community that respects and embraces diversity.

I think that’s an important lesson for us as members of the Legislative Assembly. We have enormous challenges ahead of us: an uncertain global economy and climate change, to name a few. These challenges can only be met if we in this House move forward together and provide strong examples for our citizens to do the same.

Together, Scarborough–Agincourt has built a strong community, and I know we can do the same to build a stronger Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with a famous Buddhist quote, one which inspires me as the member for Scarborough–Agincourt: “Pay no attention to the faults of others, things done or left undone by others. Consider only what by oneself is done or left undone.” Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. I’d like to congratulate the Speaker on his recent election. I wish him well and yourself well in the future and in your role. It’s an honour for me to be here today to deliver this inaugural address.

I’d like to thank the good people of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for placing their confidence in me to serve and represent their interests here in this historic Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

J’aimerais remercier tous les concitoyens de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour m’avoir démontré leur confiance en m’élisant comme leur député pour représenter leurs intérêts ici à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario.

I’d also like to thank all of my campaign team, who worked so hard on such short notice to ensure that Glengarry–Prescott–Russell remained red.

Je suis fier d’avoir été accordé le privilège de succéder au député sortant, M. Jean-Marc Lalonde, qui, pendant 16 ans, a été la voix de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell à Toronto.

I’m truly humbled at being given the privilege to succeed former MPP Jean-Marc Lalonde, who served our riding for 16 years. Mr. Lalonde worked tirelessly and selflessly to ensure that the needs of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and eastern Ontario were taken into consideration during the decision-making process here at Queen’s Park.

Les résidents de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell et moi-même remercions M. Lalonde pour toutes ses années de travail acharné au sein du secteur public, et nous lui souhaitons bonheur et succès dans ses projets futurs.

I thank Mr. Lalonde, as do the residents of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, for his many years of dedicated public service, and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

Speaker, I’ve been fortunate to have been elected to public office on four different occasions, first as mayor of Alexandria, then North Glengarry.

Je suis très chanceux d’avoir été élu à quatre reprises et d’avoir servi en tant que maire pendant 11 ans. Je peux vous assurer que ce fut une expérience enrichissante. Être au service de ses concitoyens est un honneur et un privilège. L’électorat nous procure l’opportunité de représenter ses intérêts avec dévouement et intégrité.

Serving my constituents for 11 years as a local mayor has provided me with a wide range of experience in lower-tier and upper-tier municipal government. This experience has provided me with valuable insight regarding the importance of provincial and municipal government partnerships.

Our nine mayors—and I say “nine”—mayors and councillors in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell work hard to improve the quality of life in Ontario and in our region, and together, they are our front-line voices. Ensuring that the needs of our municipal partners are respected and understood is a priority for me.

This Liberal government’s commitment to upload provincial responsibilities that were recklessly downloaded by the previous Conservative government will help give our municipal partners the funds they need to invest in much-needed infrastructure projects in their communities. This commitment will allow them to maintain reasonable property tax rates, helping them to remain competitive in retaining and attracting new investments, including residential and commercial development.

Nous avons en main un plan qui procurera aux municipalités les outils nécessaires pour les aider à maintenir un taux raisonnable par rapport aux taxes foncières.

Speaker, I also look forward to working with all our community groups and organizations in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, including our hard-working volunteers who dedicate so much of their time and knowledge to improving our quality of life and who make our communities so vibrant and strong.

Monsieur le Président, l’idée de travailler avec tous les groupes et les organisations de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, spécialement avec tous nos bénévoles, me motive énormément. Ces gens dévouent beaucoup de leur temps et de leurs connaissances afin d’améliorer la qualité de vie de tous et chacun. C’est ce qui rend nos communautés si fortes et vibrantes.

Speaker, Ontario is a great place to live, do business and raise a family. I was born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, and moved to Alexandria in this great province of Ontario with my family in 1973. My parents, Wayne and Sylvia, although retired, are active in the local community and can be seen volunteering for the local hospital, supporting the local church, where my dad drives for the Canadian Cancer Society voluntarily.

I want to take this opportunity to thank them both for the unconditional love and support they have so generously given to me, my brother, Michael, and my sister, Shelley, throughout our lives. It is a combination of their morals and values that I bring to this assembly. I know that my parents are looking forward to benefiting from the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit so they can stay in their home as long as possible.

I'm also the proud father to a daughter, Chloe, who is 24, and my son, Calvin, who is 19. I'm also the proud stepfather to Leah, who is a wonderful seven-year-old girl.

My grandson Alexi will be four years old next month and he will benefit from an early start to his education when he attends this Liberal government's initiative of full-day kindergarten next September.

I will also be enjoying the arrival of my granddaughter in March of next year, a second child to my daughter Chloe and her spouse, Pierre Paul.

Speaker, public service is rewarding but it also can be demanding. Without the support of our families, we'd be hard-pressed to accomplish the goals that we set out, to serve the people in our ridings and in all of Ontario.

That's why I take this opportunity to thank my spouse, Kelly, for her continued support, her love, her patience, her understanding and her hard work in ensuring that things go well at home while I'm away on government business or representing our constituents throughout our vast riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. She truly is the glue that holds us together and allows me to do the work that I am so passionate about and that I hold dear to my heart.

Like many ridings across Ontario, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is unique. We are a mix of rural and urban, and close to 70% of our population is francophone.

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Presque 70 % de notre population est francophone.

Our landscape is blessed with beautiful, quality farmland, including la forêt Larose and the Alfred Bog. My recent appointment by the Premier as parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for francophone affairs, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, and to the Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, is an honour, and I look forward to these challenges with great enthusiasm.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all members elected to this assembly. I look forward to working with you all and my colleagues in government to ensure that all Ontario remains the best place to live and work in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank the member for his—I hope you've left some for your maiden speech.

Mr. Grant Crack: Pardon me?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I hope you've left some information for your maiden speech. That's one hour. Thank you.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk, questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to comment and certainly, on behalf of the opposition, to congratulate both the member for Scarborough–Agin-court and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. As we know, a maiden speech is a great opportunity to talk about your riding, to talk about your family, as the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell just did and, in the case of the member for Scarborough–Agin-court, to talk about the diversity of that particular part of Ontario.

So here we are. We're just into the second week. We have two newly elected members that have joined returning members and been exposed to not only a throne speech but also what's been referred to as a fall economic statement. I don't know whether there is disappointment among these two members. If they were looking for any indication at all of fiscal restraint, I think they would be very, very disappointed. Now, granted, they have very recently joined this government, a government that in just eight years has developed a reputation for wildly out-of-control spending, a government that has single-handedly doubled Ontario's budget. And when we look at the coming several years, I don't see any indication of that being turned around.

Maybe these two members could do something about that. They've entered a new political landscape here at Queen's Park. Maybe they can put their foot down, have some comment on the binge spending that we've seen and the debt doubling. I just look forward to their contributions on that front. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome the two members, the member from Scarborough–Agin-court and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who made their first speeches today. It was very interesting to hear about your riding, to hear about how you got here, and I'm happy to see that you had some support that came and witnessed this great event. Certainly, welcome to Queen's Park. I know your riding a little bit better now, having listened to what you had to say, and I thank you for this.

Pour le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell : vous avez des grands souliers à remplir, monsieur. Jean-Marc Lalonde était un des géants autour d'ici, surtout du côté de la francophonie. C'est un bon ami, puis vous vous assurez de lui dire bonjour la prochaine fois que vous allez le voir.

J'étais contente de savoir que vous êtes grand-père et que vous allez avoir une petite-fille bientôt. Je dois vous dire que, lorsque ma première petite-fille est née, je ne pouvais passer devant un magasin qui avait du rose sans acheter. Ça s'est calmé un petit peu, mais vous allez avoir beaucoup de plaisir avec tout ce qui s'en vient.

You're certainly welcome to join us. Jean-Marc was here with you a couple of weeks ago and I had the pleasure of meeting you. You will have a good mentor; I think Jean-Marc is staying connected to this place. He

certainly was a good friend and somebody that I much respected and continue to respect.

It's great to see you and to welcome you to Queen's Park. You both did very well in your first speech, and you both allowed us to get to know you a little bit better. There will be many opportunities to continue this dialogue, but it was a pleasure to learn a little bit more about you and about your ridings. Again, bienvenue à Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions? The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I wish you all the very best in your new role. I know you will work very effectively in the chair.

I was pleased to hear the comments from my two new colleagues, the members from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Scarborough–Agincourt. Of course, their predecessors are two outstanding individuals who made terrific contributions to the Ontario Legislature and indeed to their ridings: Jean-Marc Lalonde and Gerry Phillips.

I know all of us in this House want to express our deepest sympathy to Jean-Marc Lalonde and his family with the passing of his wife this past summer. I know how important Mrs. Lalonde was in terms of Jean-Marc's public life in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. She spent a lot of time at hockey arenas over many, many years and was always there for anything that Jean-Marc Lalonde wanted to do.

I do know that these two new members from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Scarborough–Agincourt will follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. They will ably represent these two wonderful ridings, one in urban Ontario and one in rural Ontario.

I do know that both of these members mentioned today that in the throne speech we outlined our tax credit for renovations for seniors. I know there's a significant number of seniors in the riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and certainly Scarborough–Agincourt. Gerry Phillips was a strong advocate on behalf of seniors in the province of Ontario, to make sure we do everything we can to help our seniors who helped define the province that we have in Ontario today. We do know that these members will be strong advocates for the progressive policies that have been put forward by this government over the last eight-plus years.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Renfrew. Order.

Further questions? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to thank the two new members from Scarborough–Agincourt and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

As has been said before, I knew both of their predecessors very well. In fact, Gerry Phillips was a person I had a lot of respect for, a very competent, capable, respectable individual who had served on committees—I just realized now he is here. Welcome, Gerry; it's great. I

say that with all the greatest respect. I think you have big shoes to fill, so to say.

But I should say that the PC candidate, Liang Chen, I think was a very well-qualified candidate as well. She's very highly respected, highly educated, a Ph.D., I think, in economics or finance, and would have been a wonderful member as well. But I'm sure your experience as a school trustee will serve the public well.

Also, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell: I'm very impressed with your credentials municipally as well, and your remarks were very inclusive and kind. Jean-Marc was another wonderful guy, a personal friend of mine; I travelled with him a bit as well, as I also played on his hockey team. He was very well-liked here on all sides. I can say that with great confidence.

Again, our candidate in that riding was a formidable candidate as well, being that her first language was French. I had met her. In fact, I was supportive of her candidacy, and I would say that Marilissa Gosselin was a person that would have served equally well here.

But congratulations to both of you on your fine remarks, known as your maiden speech. One last remark: Generally, they used to be about an hour long. You could almost introduce your entire heritage from the beginning of time. But now it's 10 minutes, and I think it's important to get that speech out of the way so we can get down to business about being accountable to our constituents. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to acknowledge the comments and feedback from the members from Haldimand–Norfolk, Nickel Belt, Peterborough and Durham.

I also want to say to my colleague the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell that it's so touching to hear your story—heartfelt, touching—because all of us have lives. For you to be so transparent to share with us—thank you for doing that.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, my maiden speech is not just about my riding but what this government is going to do. We made a commitment to the people of Ontario and we're going to act on these commitments. I heard very loud and clear—this province will grow and grow. By 2020, over 40% of this province is aging. So this government is not waiting until 2020 to address this issue; we're doing it now. That's called progressive and proactive decision-making, okay? It's also evidence-based and it's best practices. At the end of the day, your constituents are similar to mine, and they're growing old. They are making sure each one of us is accountable and responsible to act on their needs.

I know as a registered nurse how concerned they are about living at home independently. This home renovation tax credit not only ensures that every senior in this province can stay at home, but it also creates jobs in our community. You can argue that it doesn't work, but at the end of the day, it does work and it's evidence-based. We all know that our population is growing old, and I

want to make sure that we are championing what our communities say. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I intend to split my time with the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Hub Fedeli, my father, would have been thrilled to see this day; so would my grandparents, Anne and Vittorio Fedeli and Teresa and Antonio Fava. Sadly, they've all gone before us. My wife, Patty; my mother, Lena; my sister, Teresa, along with her husband, Jack Rosenfield, and their daughters, Anna and Simona; my brother, Peter, along with his wife, Elizabeth, and their beautiful little daughter, Maggie; and my Aunt Emelia and her husband, Dan Pucher, are all watching today, likely thinking of our Italian immigrant grandparents and what this may have meant to them. They were all so helpful in getting me elected, and they were joined daily by my in-laws, Chuck and Erma Kelly. In fact, there were a lot of people who helped me get here, and I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge and thank some of them.

It all started with the launch of my candidacy for the nomination at the Italian-run Dave di Club. President Vince Orlando was a huge help that day and every single day throughout the campaign. Barb Minogue emceed the event, which was attended by over 500 people. My old and dear friend Colin Vezina and Councillor Judy Koziol spoke on my behalf. We sold 479 memberships that first hour and came out with a splash.

Next month was the nomination meeting, which had our leader, Tim Hudak, in attendance, so you can imagine it was another wall-to-wall packed house. East Ferris Mayor Bill Vrebosch nominated me, and Mattawa's Vala Monestime-Belter and North Bay Councillor Daryl Vaillancourt spoke on my behalf, followed by a roaring speech by Tim Hudak.

My campaign manager was Bill Ferguson of TWG Communications in North Bay, which is an award-winning marketing firm. Bill made it look so easy, and on election night, he just nodded approvingly as we chalked up another landslide win. He had the assistance of a very capable team behind him, and our daily contact was Donna Backer. She met every challenge with her most beautiful smile. His wife, Roxanne, and young son Hunter played a large role and kept the data flowing each and every day for us.

Shirley Fahlgren managed the office, and Erma Stevens opened the headquarters every morning and staffed the phones. I wish you could meet Erma; she was a hoot.

Kathy Wilcox coordinated all of our volunteers, which meant she was active morning to night every single day. Long-time friends and supporters Bud Maynard, Gwen Millard, Sylvia Cotgreave, Emily Stillar, Shelly Owens-Houston and Shirley Priolo were all there to make calls, enter data and do whatever needed to be done.

They were joined by many of my relatives, including Al and Teresa Fava—my aunt and uncle—and Helen and

Vince Zappala, and too many other volunteers to name individually.

Gord and Lisa Rennie handled our daily canvass. This was a monumental task that took great skill and planning and also helped me lose 10 pounds along the way.

Interjection: You need that.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes.

Jane Mortson canvassed for me every single day, rain or shine, without ever uttering one complaint. This is one senior citizen who continues to teach us years after her classroom duties have ended.

Ray Meadows put up every single large sign and then took them all down 30 days later. Thankfully, he had Dave Paterson at his side and an army of drivers to put up the 2,500 lawn signs. Mike Oakes also helped with signs and was our go-to guy for every imaginable task.

There were three Nipissing University students who worked so enthusiastically for me: Alisa DiBenedetto, Sarah Goodes and Neil Siviter. I was particularly proud of the work ethic displayed by these bright young students.

Rich Stivrins, our local association president, managed the get-out-the-vote program, and obviously managed it well. It's impossible to name all the scrutineers, but I certainly thank them for all the time they spent away from their families.

Campaigns cost money, and my friend Tony Koziol saw to it that we had all the funds necessary to win in Nipissing.

We met some real regional leaders along the way. Blair Beatty took care of Powassan, and Joe and Jan Bennett taught me everything I needed to know about Trout Creek. Pauline Rochefort and her family handled Astorville, and the mayors and councillors in most other communities took me around to all the local functions.

Finally, there were hundreds of donors who gave their hard-earned money to me so that I could get here today and bring change to Ontario. To them I say, I won't let you down.

While we didn't win enough seats to form the government, we are certainly the party on the rise. I congratulate the 15 new PC members and the entire returning caucus on your election. We were sent here to do a job, and we're well on our way to delivering that message and pushing for change. We will focus on sending Ontario's economy down the right path.

Ladies and gentlemen, the one passion that I have, coming from North Bay and the riding of Nipissing, in a community with 70 mining and manufacturing firms, is indeed the Ring of Fire. I had the great pleasure to fly up to the Ring of Fire this summer—eight flights to get there and back. I have to tell you that as I flew over the Ring of Fire and looked down at the mine site and saw those blue and white tents—it wouldn't mean anything to many of you, but to me it was Canadian Can-Tex, of Rutherglen, Ontario, in the riding of Nipissing. Their tents were on display down there.

As we landed and walked through the mine site, we saw drill rigs and drill rods. Again, there are so many

companies in Nipissing that manufacture drill rods. It's impossible to name them all in this short period of time. But I do tell you that it is for those companies—those men and women and all their employees—that I stand here today to tell you I was elected.

I was elected to represent North Bay, Nipissing, northern Ontario and all of Ontario, but I have to tell you: To me, there is no greater opportunity than that Ring of Fire for our companies in Nipissing and for all of Ontario. So you will find over our term here that that will be a particular passion of mine.

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I thank the communities in Nipissing for electing me, and I will bring all of your concerns to Queen's Park.

I thank the government for their work on the Ring of Fire to date and look forward to pushing even deeper, because we need to get there for all of Ontario.

I thank our former member, MPP Monique Smith, former government House leader, for her eight years of service to our community.

My job will be to shine a light on Nipissing, as well as northern Ontario, so that we can deliver on our priorities to all Ontarians. This is going to take a lot of work and a lot of time. This is time I will be away from Patty.

Patty, I know you're home watching on Cogeco in Corbeil today, and I want to tell you the same thing I said to you when I ran for my two terms in the mayor's chair of North Bay: Thanks so much, babe, for sharing this duty with me and for allowing so many people into our lives. I love you, Patty.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from—I hope I've got this right—Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You have it right.

I'd like to thank the member from Nipissing for sharing his time with me today. I'd also like to take this opportunity and thank the constituents of Elgin–Middlesex–London for putting their trust in me to be their voice here in the hallowed halls of Queen's Park.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may not know this but the Speaker and I share the same predecessor, the Honourable Steve Peters. After many years of public service at the municipal and provincial levels government, Steve is now embarking on a new chapter of life, and on behalf of the constituents of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I wish him well.

My inaugural speech will address the speech from the throne.

At the turn of the last century, my grandfather, Charles Yurek, a young man in his mid-teens, left Poland for Canada alone in search of a better life and opportunity. He was a hard-worker, travelling in the country, working physically demanding jobs and working with the railroad. By luck of an introduction by friends, he met my grandmother, also from Poland, Josephine Bus. They settled in the railway capital of Canada, St. Thomas.

They struggled, raising three boys during the Depression. They had their problems, yet my grandfather's resolve was unbreakable as he laboured to put food on

his family's table and ensure not only a better life for himself but for the boys he and Josephine were raising. Charles and Josephine Yurek instilled not only a solid work ethic in their sons but a sense of community and understanding of the importance of giving back. My grandfather built bikes for the neighbourhood children while my grandmother served to aid new immigrants seeking to settle in St. Thomas.

During these difficult years their door was always open to neighbours in need. Not one was ever turned away when they needed something to eat.

Such compassion and hard work rubbed off on my father, Ed, who in 1963 opened Yurek Pharmacy. He took a chance. He was diligent in his profession and gave superior customer service. His generation was fortunate. Entrepreneurialism could flourish without the worry and threat of government interference and red tape.

I am lucky to have a great family and live in the best country in the world. I was born and raised in St. Thomas and up until October 6 worked as a pharmacist at Yurek Pharmacy, which I co-own with my brother Pete.

I myself come from a large family: three older brothers, two older sisters. Each has been successful in their respective career and family life, and I look to them for guidance and support.

I am passionate about my profession. I have worked in my family's small, independent pharmacy since I was six years old. I began working on Sundays doing odd jobs while my dad looked after the inventory. It has been and will continue to be a part of me.

In the past 16 years, my brother and I have created jobs employing up to 60 people and have opened a home health care store in London. I am proud of the accomplishments, building on the success of my father. Yurek Pharmacy, an independent pharmacy, celebrates 50 years of business in 2013.

I stand before the Legislature today as I begin a new chapter in my life. My reasons are simple: I want a better future for my daughter, a future where there is a sound and meaningful education system that provides the tools and content to learn what is needed to grow and compete in the global market. I want her to have a good-paying job and the ability to stay and work in rural Ontario. Sadly, I do not see this happening under the current direction of the province. We need to stop mortgaging our future generations. I believe, like my constituents, that we need change, positive change for the benefit of all Ontario families, and that is why I am here today.

My parents were very supportive of me being interested in politics, but at the time of going to university they knew my passion and interest in pharmacy. My mother tactfully educated me on the notion that if I did eventually run for public office and it did not work out for me, as a pharmacist I would have something to fall back on. I thank my parents for their insight, and it was the right decision. In fact, I believe being a pharmacist and being an active member of the community has prepared me well for the job at hand.

After graduating from the University of Toronto in 1995, I began work at the Yurek Pharmacy. As a pharmacist, I began to meet many people of the community; became a member of the Knights of Columbus; joined the local Alzheimer's board, which I chaired for seven years; and joined the Rotary Club, because I believed in their motto, "Service before self." I held many positions in the club, including president and chair of their local music festival.

I've also served as chair of the St. Thomas and District Chamber of Commerce. It was here that my eyes were opened to government policy which has decimated the manufacturing sector and single-handedly paralyzed small business. I do not agree with the government of the last eight years; I want to see change. I've always believed in the PC Party, and I believe in Tim Hudak.

While my riding includes parts of London, it is mainly small-town, rural Ontario. There are many positive highlights of my riding: Mackies in Port Stanley, a family-owned independent business for 100 years, caterers to beachgoers and tourists. Families travel to the beach for their famous French fries and orangeade. Summertime as a child was playing soccer and visiting Shaw's Ice Cream to get a milkshake or an Elgin Special after a warm day. Today, after coaching my own daughter's soccer team, we still go to Shaw's, an independent, strong family business in Elgin county, for a milkshake.

We enjoy visiting Ferguson's farms to buy strawberries in the spring, corn in the summer and pumpkins in the fall. I would be remiss if I didn't note the apple-picking season throughout our county—many, many apple orchards available, many varieties.

Our family has a tradition of preparing dill pickles every July, when the cucumbers are ready. Living in rural Ontario allows us to access fresh, locally grown ingredients. We drive to the eastern portion of the riding, past Aylmer, to the Mennonite community and get fresh cucumbers out of the field and cut our own dill for the pickling.

It is the people and small businesses in our communities that make living in our riding special. London brings a bit of the big city, if you will, to our area, yet smaller areas like Lambeth keep their small-town appeal. Recently I participated in Harvestfest, and despite Lambeth being part of London, the fair felt like many of the small-town fall fairs that I have seen through Thorndale to Rodney. I've learned a lot about the issues facing the families in my riding in politics, and what must be manoeuvred these past few months.

Family plays the most crucial role in ensuring that I'm able to do the best job for the constituents of the riding. I've been married for 10 years to my wife, Jenn, and we have a beautiful daughter, seven-year-old Maggie. I didn't realize the effects that politics has on a seven-year-old. After the election, her teacher pulled me aside and said she congratulated Maggie on my win. Maggie replied that there was only one bad thing about her dad winning the election. I figured there was a problem with

her being upset that I'd be away from home quite a bit, but I was wrong. My daughter told her teacher that the worst thing about her dad winning the election was that I would now have to work with Dalton McGuinty. This story shows the support and encouragement that even children provide in political life.

Our riding has fallen on tough times with all the job losses. We are one of the hardest hit in the area. People suffer with the stress of job loss and the inability to pay their bills and mortgages, which in turn ripples throughout the local economy. I believe in the local potential for my riding. I know we can be productive and contribute significantly to Ontario's economy, but we need the type of leadership that encourages, not discourages, private investment and job creation.

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Small businesses will be the job creators and bring our economy back. We need government to lower the regulatory burden so that Ontario's entrepreneurship is able to grow. Small businesses are the ones who sponsor our hockey, basketball, soccer and football teams. They're the first ones to donate door prizes for all our community events. Often, small business owners are looked on for help by the municipalities to find solutions to their problems.

I would like to point out that farms are also small businesses. We need to make farming sustainable so that the next generation can take over the farm and continue these businesses in our communities.

I will be diligent in my work to ensure that we have a sustainable health care system. I worked at it every day. I know the problems and the waste that continues to exist. It must stop. We must have the willingness to change health care for the good and for the people.

There's too much bureaucracy in the system, and we need to get more money going to front-line health care providers. Health care is important to everyone. We need it, now that the boomer generation is using the system more, but it needs to be available for future generations as well. Continuing to throw money at problems is not the solution, nor is scandal that wastes billions of dollars in the system.

Education is also important to me. I'm a dad, and I want the best for my daughter. We need to ensure that the resources and technology that students in urban ridings have is available to those in the rural system, especially the single-school communities.

We need to take a firm stance on bullying. Technology today allows for bullying to occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. It is time to protect our children and remove the bullies from our schools. Give the teachers and principals the tools they need, and ensure that they use them to protect our children.

I look forward to working with the members present today to make the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London a better place to live. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—I've been waiting a long time to say those words.

I'd like to commend the two new members, from Nipissing and from Elgin–Middlesex–London, for their inaugural speeches here in the House. I listened intently to what they both had to say.

The member from Nipissing talked about his family and his friends. He gave us literally an entire list, I think, of the people who live in and around North Bay. I commend him for having such knowledge and remembrance of all the people who worked on his campaign.

He closed off, toward the end, talking about a very important aspect of Ontario life, or one that conceivably could be, and that is the Ring of Fire. He talked about how important it is for this province to develop the Ring of Fire, and I am in complete agreement with him. That is one of the key aspects of our economy that has to succeed, not only for the people of this province but especially for the people who live around it: the First Nations communities around Marten Falls (Ogoki), which is the closest town, and the others that are around that ring.

I read with some dismay, yesterday, speculation that some of the mining operation and some of the smelting procedure is being considered to be sent to China. I hope, for the member's sake, that it is all done in northern Ontario, in Nipissing, Sudbury, Timmins or any other place where we have the facility to do it.

I listened to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He started off by talking about his predecessor, Steve Peters, who of course is no stranger to this House, and he went on to talk about his life as a pharmacist. As I listened to him talk about his family, it became abundantly clear that this new member is a true believer in what he stands for in terms of his party and its platform. He is a man to be reckoned with, I am sure, and I hope that he gets many opportunities to speak in this House.

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's nice to see you in the Speaker's chair enforcing the rules.

First of all, I want to welcome the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London and the member from Nipissing. You are embarking on an incredible opportunity that the people in your ridings have given you. I wish the members incredible success in their personal goals for their ridings and in being able to achieve the type of prosperity that I'm sure the people of the riding who elected you to come here want for their particular riding.

I want to focus a few comments about the member for Nipissing and what he said, only because there has been a strong bond between us over many, many years. I knew Vic's dad, and the member from Nipissing is right: His father would be very proud of him. In fact, his father is very proud of him and is probably looking down from heaven, without any doubt at all as far as I'm concerned,

with much love, a great deal of respect and an admiration for a job well done. There's absolutely no question about that.

I'm glad the member for Nipissing mentioned Monique Smith. We know they had a unique partnership, but it was a good partnership for the people of North Bay.

You will notice, Speaker, that I'm not being at all political in this, nor will I be, because this is a maiden speech, where the member gets the opportunity to outline and suggest his goals for his riding.

Finally, the member for Nipissing, Vic, mentioned his wife, Patty. I know Patty very, very well. She is an incredibly supportive person for Vic and for the people of North Bay, and it's no wonder that he ended off by simply saying, "Patty, I love you"—because their love is truly a very, very strong love, and they support each other.

I welcome the member from Nipissing and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London to the House. Good luck as we pursue that which is in the best interests of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to comment on our two new members—two of our 16 new members—in their initial, maiden speeches: the member from Nipissing, Vic Fedeli, and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek. They are two very fine members, as I think you learned a bit from their maiden speeches.

It is interesting how much family has played a part in their coming to this place. I know Vic mentioned his father, Hub Fedeli: I think just after he passed away, Vic was not wearing his trademark yellow tie, and I made a comment about it, not realizing that for many, many years his father had tied his tie for him each day. The sign that he wasn't wearing a tie was because his father had just passed away, and of how close his family is to him.

I had the pleasure of going with the member from Nipissing to the Ring of Fire. He was very excited about finding these tents from North Bay and various products made in North Bay and Nipissing that were on-site at this mine site, and I'm sure he will do good work in furthering that.

I think we learned a lot about the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I've been to schools, and you get asked by the kids, "What are the qualifications necessary to be an MPP?" I think the biggest qualification you need is some life experience. Certainly, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London demonstrated that he has got a tremendous amount of life experience as an active member of so many different community organizations, as a pharmacist, and some real-life experience in business, dealing with the rules and regulations that you need to deal with in this province.

Congratulations to both. I'd note that the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London is keeping up the tradi-

tion of doing a good advertisement for his riding and promoting Ontario-grown products as well as the former member used to do. It's just a real pleasure to have these two new members here in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a pleasure to hear the member from Nipissing explain and talk to us about his family. You can feel, just by the way he delivered his speech, how important family is to him, and all the more power to him. He also gave us an extensive list of his supporters, and here again you could feel that they were more than supporters; they were friends, and they have personal meaning to him. I thank him for sharing that with us. It sure was a long list, so you're very well liked in your community, and you will be very well liked here too, once people get to know you.

I've had the pleasure to be on the set of Steve Paikin with you. I think that was the first time we met officially, and right away I knew that we would be good friends. I liked the way that you handled the questions. We have different parties, different views as to how things would move forward, but you certainly have a very human way of moving things forward and bringing your thoughts forward.

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I knew you when you were the mayor of North Bay. I heard you on CBC numerous times. I saw you on the news as well. I have no doubt that you will be representing the people of Nipissing with—you'll be a good member for them.

For the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, I very much look forward to meeting your daughter. She has a very good sense of humour, and I love people with a good sense of humour. This little joke you shared with us was certainly priceless, and I will remember this for a long time and I look forward to seeing her. If you ever bring her to Queen's Park, make sure to introduce her to me. I would love to meet her.

Welcome, both of you, to Queen's Park, and—

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's on Comedy Central next week.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Our colleague says she's on Comedy Central next week. It was pretty funny. I laughed, anyway.

Welcome to Queen's Park. I think you will do good for your ridings, both of you. Thank you.

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

Two-minute response: the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. To our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, I enjoyed your inaugural speech very much. I feel more familiar with your riding today, and I can hardly wait to get there and to have you treat us to some of the Ontario products that you spoke about.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Especially those milkshakes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Exactly.

To the member from Beaches–East York: I assure you that communication with the First Nations is of paramount importance in dealing with this Ring of Fire. I view it as a real opportunity for them to have a true stake in Ontario's future. I really look forward to hearing more from you on that.

To the member from Nickel Belt: Thank you very much for your comments. You said something on air that day that I really took to heart: When you were talking about the toing and froing within the Legislature you said, "Where else can you go to work and yell at your co-workers and not get fired?" It was just really quite interesting to hear your comment, and that really did sink in with me. That sunk in with me very much, and I really appreciate it.

To my friend the member from Sudbury: I had the greatest honour, first of all, serving as mayor of the city of North Bay, but being able to work with you as the minister. You paid attention to North Bay, you always had time for me as mayor, my council, my administrators. I always appreciated your professionalism, and I look forward to a long and wonderful career sitting across from you, on either side. But I really appreciated your openness.

In the last seconds, Speaker, I would like to say, on a personal note: Yes, my father is watching today. Rick did come to my dad's funeral and, sadly, I had the opportunity to return the courtesy at his mother's funeral. So, we do have a bit of a bond. We'll try not to let that get too deep into our way, but I hope it gets a lot into our way so that we always remember that friendship and friendly nature.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The afternoon has been truly enjoyable. I've learned a lot about four new members to this House. Now, it is my pleasure to bring us back to the speech from the throne, so I hope everybody will enjoy that just as much.

The first thing I would like to talk about comes on page 7, when they say, and I'll read just one paragraph from the throne speech that goes: "In combination with this new tax credit"—they're talking about the healthy homes renovation tax credit—"your government will move to increase home care services for seniors.

"These two initiatives would improve seniors' quality of life by allowing them to stay in their own homes longer and provide a real, tangible benefit to taxpayers by saving long-term-care costs."

I was really happy to see that little bit about the health care system in the throne speech. Our home care system is certainly in need of attention. I would actually say that, frankly, our home care system is broken. Although the government has increased the funding going into home care—and apparently, by what I read in the throne speech, is about to continue to invest in home care, which I wholly support—the way the system is working now, it is not working. We are not getting quality care for the money we pay.

We spend close to \$2 billion a year from the Ministry of Health for home care services. This amount has increased dramatically under the leadership of the McGuinty government. Unfortunately, for the amount of money more that we have invested, we did not get more hands-on care.

You see, way back in 1996, Ontario embarked on this privatization of our home care system. We introduced the competitive bidding system. What the competitive bidding system is, Mr. Speaker, is that companies that offer home care services bid for the contract. The idea, back then, was that if different companies outbid one another, the taxpayers would get some savings. It was a PC government who brought forward the competitive bidding process, and what we saw in Ontario was almost the complete elimination of the not-for-profit sector.

The for-profits came into Ontario with a vengeance. All of the big American companies that provide home care bid on all of those contracts, and when you read those contracts you figured, “My goodness, they have cloned Mother Teresa. The care that we’re going to be providing in Ontario will be equal to none.” The compassion was dripping off of the pages. It was a thing of beauty to read. Then reality set in.

This experiment has failed, Mr. Speaker. We have now a for-profit-dominated home care system, where the home care providers cannot recruit and retain a stable workforce. Back then—I can speak for my own area in Sudbury—we had VON, which provided home care. VON had been providing home care for a hundred years. They had staff that worked home care as career home care workers. They were paid a decent salary; they had a pension plan; they had benefits. They had mainly women there that made a career of it. They became really, really good at providing home care services. That’s all they did and they did it with passion, because this is what they liked to do, and we had very good home care services in Ontario delivered by the not-for-profits, which were able to recruit and retain a stable workforce, which were able to give us quality care.

What have we got now? A whole bunch of for-profit agencies. A few not-for-profits have survived, but they’re very few and far between, and each and every one of them is not able to recruit, is not able to retain. I can talk about the Red Cross, a not-for-profit. Last week—actually, today, now that I think of it—they are celebrating the graduation of four classes of PSWs. PSW stands for personal support workers. They are the bread and butter of our home care system. They are the workers that do most of the work, that go into our parents’ home or grandparents’ home and provide the care.

Four full classes: Parry Sound, North Bay, Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie. Four classes. They’re in Sudbury today celebrating the class that is graduating. Out of the 30 or so graduating, you know how many of them are staying in home care? Out of 30, you figure 25 or 26? Zero. The minute they graduate, they leave the sector.

Red Cross, like everybody else, has to compete under the bidding system to get a contract to offer home care

services. They tried to do their best, but the bidding system has basically brought us to a race to the bottom, a race to the bottom where nobody—not nobody; there are some—but very few people stay.

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Do you know what that means, Mr. Speaker? That means that when my 90-year-old—he’s about to be 91—father-in-law has somebody come and help him with his bath, every third week or so, he’s stripped naked in front of a pure stranger because every three weeks he has a new worker who comes to help him with his bath. He doesn’t like to strip naked in front of a stranger every three weeks; he doesn’t like that at all, but this is what they all have to do because they’re forever recruiting and training new home care workers, because our home care system is broken, and it needs to be fixed.

It is one part of the health care system that is mentioned in the throne speech, but it is not mentioned in the way that I would like it to be. It is mentioned in the way that we need to invest more; I agree 100%. If we had a strong and robust home care system, we could do way better.

If you ask any of your moms and dads and aunts and uncles and grandmothers and grandfathers where they want to stay, they want to stay home. Never, never underestimate the power of home; it is really, really strong. It keeps us young. It keeps us wanting to keep on going, because this is home and home matters. This is where they want to stay; this is where they want to live.

But as they become frailer, sometimes they need a little bit of help. This is where home care comes in, and you would wish for home care to be there and provide the services that, frankly, they’ve paid for. For all of the years of their life, they paid taxes; they contributed toward the home care system. Now they need a little bit of help, for a bath, to check on their medication, maybe help with a little bit around the house as well, to keep them safe in their own home. But we have this continuously revolving door.

I can speak of my own experience of going over to my in-laws’ and seeing a little bit of a bedding incident. I threw the whole thing in the wash and said, “Well, when the home care worker comes, all she’ll have to do is put it in the dryer, and then she can put the sheets and everything back on the bed.” The home care worker didn’t show up. My mother-in-law, who is not quite five feet tall, cannot bend over into the laundry tub to retrieve the laundry in there, so it just sits there until somebody from the family will go. You thought, “Well, this only happens once in a while.” Absolutely not. It happens all the time. Not so bad, a load of laundry stays there; it’s not going to kill you. But I expect better than this. I expected the worker to come.

I don’t blame the worker; I don’t blame her at all. She gets a call from Walmart; she will make more money there, and she won’t have to travel. My riding is huge and there is lots of rural area in Ontario. By the time they travel, they can work a 10-hour shift, and they get paid for six of them. Those are not good working conditions.

We all value the work that the home care worker does. How come we don't reflect this in the way we pay them? How come we don't reflect this in the type of benefits that we give to them? My mother-in-law couldn't believe it when she found out how much her home care worker was being paid. She said, "But I pay my cleaning lady more than that." Yes, you do, and so do I. Do we blame them for wanting to move on, wanting to go? The long-term-care sector pays a little bit more. If you can get a job in the hospital, it will pay even more for doing exactly the same job: providing care to people who need it.

But if you happen to be providing care in a home care setting, in the community, you have those for-profit companies that fall over one another for the contracts. I may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I'm thinking that if they fight for those contracts, it's probably because they are making money out of those contracts. Otherwise, they wouldn't fight for them, would they? They would let them run to somebody else. But no, when a contract comes up for bidding, they fight one another tooth and nail to get those contracts.

They write up those proposals that are just awe-inspiring. "We are finally going to get good care," and then the reality sets in. The reality sets in in my riding, where this woman depends on chronic home care. She gets them daily. She is severely disabled. She is very young, very joyful and is enjoying life to the fullest, but she needs help. She phones her mom at 4 a.m., after waking up in her wheelchair; her worker never came to put her to bed. So it's 4 o'clock in the morning and her mother, who lives close to where I live, in Walden, has to do the half-hour drive into town to where her daughter is to help her daughter transfer from her wheelchair to her bed. By that time—I don't know if you know anything about people with disability. If you sit without moving for too long, you risk getting what most people call bedsores, which basically are big trouble if you are disabled.

The cases go on like this, where you cannot depend on the home care system; you are forever being cancelled.

I have another elderly gentleman in Lively who looks after his wife. They have the most cheerful home, with birds and cats. They're just very, very cheerful people. They are quite elderly, but he manages to look after her as best he can. He cannot lift her, but once the home care worker comes and helps to transfer her into a wheelchair, he looks after her all day long and looks after her needs. They're very happy to be together in their home. But every second weekend, the worker doesn't show. Every second weekend, it's the same thing. You try to connect with the caseworker, who is nowhere to be found. By the time she calls you back, it's Monday, and she has spent another three days without home care, another three days without being able to go from her chair back into her bed, or vice versa, to come out of bed. But most of the time, they don't show up at night, so she's stuck in her wheelchair all night long. He's not able to transfer her because he's too frail, so he ends up calling the neighbours; he ends up calling anybody who will come and help. This is

not a dignified way to look after your wife. They are supposed to get home care, but the home care system is broken.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the members on the government side please—there are too many sidebars. Could you please take it outside? I'd appreciate it. Thank you. I can't hear the speaker.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was talking about a part of the throne speech—they put it under the fourth item in the throne speech—that had to do with the focus on improving quality of life for families. I couldn't agree more that to improve quality of life for a lot of families in Ontario is to strengthen our home care system, to build a strong and robust home care system that will be dependable, that will be there for the people who need it.

Well, in order to reach this, in order to reach quality care, you need continuity of care. If you don't have continuity of care, you will never have quality care. We are not building widgets here; we are looking after people. And to look after people, there is a human bond that takes place. You trust your worker. They get to know you. They get to know what hurts, what doesn't, and what kind of transfer works good and what kind of transfer doesn't work good. They get to know your bathroom and how they can help you go from your chair to the tub or the shower or whatever else. But when you have a new worker coming every two or three weeks, it just doesn't work.

I just got a present delivered all of a sudden. Thank you.

So it just doesn't work. You need the continuity of care.

What I'm urging the government to do is really, when they say that they are going to increase home care services for seniors, don't just invest more money into a broken system. Look into how we strengthen what we have, so at the end of the day, we deliver what we want to deliver, which is quality care to the people who need it. They deserve nothing less.

1500

Ça me fait toujours plaisir, monsieur le Président, quand je vois que dans le discours du trône on parle un petit peu—pas beaucoup, mais on parle un petit peu—du service de santé. Plus précisément, on parle des soins à domicile. Ce n'est pas la première fois que j'en parle ; j'ai l'impression que ce ne sera pas la dernière fois non plus. Le système de soins à domicile en Ontario ne fonctionne plus. Il est brisé. Ça ne fonctionne pas.

En ce moment, les soins à domicile sont dominés par des agences à profit. Donc, quand on sait que c'est une agence à profit qui offre le service, la priorité numéro un, ce n'est pas nécessairement la qualité des soins ; la priorité numéro un, c'est de faire de l'argent.

Je sais que le gouvernement de M. McGuinty a beaucoup investi. Pour les soins à domicile, maintenant, on investit près de deux milliards par année. Ça a augmenté de beaucoup, de façon importante, mais même

si on y a investi beaucoup plus, on ne voit pas vraiment sur le terrain tellement d'amélioration du côté de la qualité des soins, et pas beaucoup d'amélioration du côté des soins à domicile.

Qu'est-ce qui arrive? C'est que les agences essaient de recruter, essaient de maintenir des travailleurs et travailleuses en place, mais ont beaucoup de difficulté parce que les conditions de travail, franchement, sont médiocres. Donc, qu'est-ce qui arrive? La travailleuse à domicile ne se montre pas. La personne qui en dépend finit souvent par avoir des problèmes; elle finit par se rendre à l'urgence de l'hôpital; elle finit par être admise à l'hôpital, et là, elle devient un cas de personne qu'on ne trouve pas que c'est sécuritaire de retourner à la maison, parce que c'est là que les problèmes ont commencé, et cette personne-là est prise dans un lit d'hôpital. Elle ne veut pas être là. Elle veut, comme toutes les autres personnes, demeurer à la maison, demeurer chez elle, mais ce n'est pas une option, parce que pour demeurer chez elle, on aurait besoin d'un système de soins à domicile qui est robuste. On aurait besoin d'un système de soins à domicile qui soutient les personnes, mais à tout bout de champ, parce que les compagnies ne sont pas capables de recruter et de garder leurs employés, ou bien les employés ne se montrent pas.

J'en ai eu plusieurs expériences moi-même. Mes beaux-parents utilisaient les services à domicile, et j'ai beaucoup, beaucoup de gens qui demeurent dans mon comté qui sont venus me voir pour me dire, « Ma fille avait besoin des soins à domicile. Elle est restée dans sa chaise toute la nuit. Elle m'a appelé en plein milieu de la nuit pour me dire que la personne des soins à domicile n'était pas venue. Elle avait besoin d'aide pour retourner dans son lit ».

J'ai des exemples de couples âgés, couples aînés, qui demeurent ensemble. Lui s'occupe de sa femme et c'est la même histoire: à toutes les deux fins de semaine, la travailleuse ne se montre pas. Lui n'est pas capable de la transférer de sa chaise à son lit, puis là les problèmes commencent.

On pourrait faire une grosse différence dans la qualité de vie des gens si on changeait la structure de nos soins à domicile. J'espère que la petite ligne qu'on a retrouvée dans le discours du trône au sujet des soins à domicile ne se traduira pas tout simplement par un investissement financier dans un système qui ne fonctionne plus, mais vraiment de regarder à restructurer à fond le système des soins à domicile pour qu'on offre des soins de qualité aux gens qui en ont besoin. On ne leur doit rien de moins.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: My thanks and congratulations to the member for Nickel Belt. Congratulations on your election victory. The member and I worked together closely on a number of issues and I'm sure that we'll continue to do so.

In terms of your remarks today, thank you very much for, up front, acknowledging that, indeed, more dollars

are certainly going into the health care system. I think all of us want to see the system work better, and being able to help more people is one of the goals that I think all of us in this Legislature share. We all recognize how valuable home care can be in terms of helping the challenges that we have in our hospital system, particularly in our acute care hospital system.

Like so many people in this chamber, I would say, certainly listening to those who have been speaking even today, I'm very grateful for the home care system in terms of how, when my mother was very much in need and we very much wanted to keep my mother at home, the home care system was incredibly helpful. We were very fortunate that, indeed, she was able to find a home care worker who was consistently there, with whom she developed a very positive relationship, and one understands how important that is. So there's no question that that's something we all very much agree on.

In terms of our overall priorities, I think, again, despite the differences that we may have here amongst the three parties in the Legislature, we do understand how important health care is; we do understand that, obviously, as a priority in terms of how we spend those dollars in the health care system, they need to be spent wisely, if not more wisely. Again, I think we share our goals. That's certainly the case as well for education.

Certainly as northerners—I will say that to my northern colleagues in the Legislature and all of us who represent the north—we recognize how important it is also to make decisions that are going to be creating jobs and improving the economy in northern Ontario, despite all of the challenges we've seen in the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further comments? The member from Grey–Bruce–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Close: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Speaker, but you're right on. Thank you very much, Speaker, and congratulations to you in your official appointment. I wish you well.

Congratulations to my colleague from Nickel Belt. I share your sense of humour, and I hope that the Premier also takes that in stride and understands where Jeff's daughter was coming from. I also share your passion, and I commend you for your passion particularly for health care. As the deputy critic, I look forward to working with you collaboratively to ensure that our system is the best it can be.

I noted in your earliest comments that you referenced taxpayer savings. I want to just say that it was my pleasure to vote with your party to remove the HST from the home hydro bill, and we'll continue to do that. I would actually reach out to my colleagues across the floor from the Liberals and respectfully ask them to reconsider and respect the will of the voter on that initial bill.

You then went on to talk a little bit about competitive bidding, and I believe that we need to have competitive bidding to ensure that we have value for our dollar. Every

taxpayer dollar should be spent wisely, frugally and practically.

You then talked a little bit about the for-profit, and when there's competitive bidding that's for profit, I think we have to always remind ourselves: Who do we run to when we have the big fundraisers? We run to big business and small business and say, "Please give to us." When we run a little hockey tournament, we run to the businesses and we say, "Please give us a handout." When we need something else, we run and we say, "Please give." I think we have to understand who supports charity. Where does the money come from? Who creates the jobs if we don't have a strong economy, if we do not have those businesses to be able to fund?

So I think we always have to look and realize that if people do not have money, they're not helping the less fortunate, and, in fact, they are more harmed by not having a thriving economy than we are.

Our PC priority is to create an environment whereby there's opportunity for people to make a good living and to have the funding and the support so that they can support those and help those who are in trouble and have a little bit of a need for help. If we utilize taxes in a practical manner, I believe we have lots of money to ensure that we have the best province to live, work and play.

I look forward to working with you and all of my colleagues who have been privileged to be elected to make sure that we do have the best province possible.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, I've had a lot of experience in the community sector of home care for the last 21 years. I can tell you that the competitive bidding process has seriously eroded health care not only for seniors, but for every patient that gets discharged from a hospital, for every patient that's waiting to go into a nursing home, because not only were personal support workers affected in this process, but RNs, RPNs and physiotherapists were all affected. Where they used to have a full-time job with pensions and benefits, they're now working at two or three agencies to try to make a buck, to get full-time hours and to make enough money to support their families. We lost strong, stable agencies across this province, non-profit, from VON and St. Elizabeth, who had long-term employees who knew about giving appropriate, good care to patients and to seniors. It is piece-work now, I can tell you.

I don't know if any of you ever worked in a canning factory in your youth, but living in Niagara, we had many. I worked in the canning factory, and the kind of care we're giving now is like a conveyor belt in a canning factory. It's not right, it's not dignified, and our seniors deserve better.

1510

My mother had surgery a couple of months ago. She needed dressing changes every day. She had five caregivers over seven days, and the priority was to "make sure you fill out your evaluation; we want to make sure

that you got good care." Well, how do you get good care when you have a different person going into an 86-year-old woman's home five times over seven days? It's not right, and we need to fix it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker, and my personal congratulations to you on being named the Acting Speaker. It's a real pleasure to see you in the chair, and it's also a pleasure to respond to my colleague from Nickel Belt, particularly now that I'm at least in close physical proximity. I used to be in another postal code at the other end of the chamber, and it's nice to actually be able to look at you so closely.

The member brought forward a number of very interesting remarks on the speech from the throne. I'd just like to put some of them into the context that we see them in my home city of Mississauga, facing much the same problems that she brought up, in 2003.

We were able to deliver, ahead of schedule and under budget, a major expansion to the Credit Valley Hospital, which was announced in 2005; we got construction started in 2007, ahead of schedule. And it was completed and opened in May of this past year, 2011, ahead of schedule and under budget. The formal opening was just in November.

It's made a big difference in our community. Where we traditionally deliver some 5,500 babies per year at Credit Valley Hospital, we had, prior to phase 2, a facility that would only allow us—it was only built for a capacity of 4,700, so that gave us some real scheduling problems. We've gone from 365 beds to 472, adding complex continuing care, and have shown that it is possible to renew and properly fund the system working within the constraints that we have here in the province of Ontario and working with the budget that we have.

I'd also like, in my last seconds, to acknowledge the many residents of Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar who greeted me, my spouse, Andrea, and our big fuzzy cat, Obi-Wan, in yesterday's Santa Claus parade.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt has a two-minute response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will start by thanking the Minister of Natural Resources for his comments. We have worked together well on a number of issues, and I hope this good relationship will continue. The challenges in northern Ontario often surround equity of access when it comes to health care, but we also have a major challenge with our forestry industry, which has a really tough time rebounding from the last recession. I hope we're able to help that along.

For the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the idea that competitive bidding added anything to our health care system is wrong. Now, rather than sharing best practices in home care, they hide them from one another and consider them as a competitive advantage. This is not how our health care system works. In our health care system you bring everybody together. You share best practices so we can all learn and we can all

benefit from it. But none of this can happen when you have companies bidding over one another. They want the competitive advantage; therefore, they withdraw best practices till forever, so that they can use it to their fiscal advantage. When money comes ahead of care, you never get quality.

The member from Welland: Thank you so much for your comments. My colleague certainly talks from well-known experience, having been, and still is, a nurse for decades, with in-depth knowledge of how our home care system works, as well as how our home care system could be improved. Before we invest in a broken system, let's look at how we could all make it better.

Then my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville: Yes, part of our health care system needs renewing. I'm happy that it worked out in your riding. I want it to work in all of the ridings.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'll be dividing my time with the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

As I stand here, I cannot help but reflect on the incredible journey that has brought me here. It's a journey that began when I first got off a plane at Pearson International Airport one August afternoon many, many years ago. I have to say, it was love at first sight. The stunning lake, the beautiful buildings, the clean, orderly streets—it was all so different from the India I had left behind. It's a love that I have to say has deepened over time, but it's also been tested.

My first shock was my new home. It was a basement apartment with cockroaches. But I was young, and I thought, "You know what? I'm going to get a good job and rent a better place." So I went about looking for a job, and that's when I came up against that very famous question, "But do you have Canadian experience?" Of course I didn't, so that went nowhere.

I thought, "If I can't get a decent job, I'm going to study and upgrade my skills." I thought about doing an MBA, and that's when I found out that my CA degree from India and my B.Com. were equal to grade 13 in Ontario.

There I was in my basement apartment with no job prospects and apparently no educational prospects. Needless to say, I was a little disappointed.

But what's really remarkable about my story is the fact that it's just so ordinary. It's the story of countless immigrants through the ages, no matter where they came from or whether they came here in the 1800s, the 1900s or the 21st century. It's in fact the story of many people who live in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, stories of the incredible struggle it can be to build a new life in a new country.

But they're also stories of hope and courage, because no matter how bad things get, we never go back and we don't give up because we believe that tomorrow will be better than today; if not for us, then for our children. That, to me, is the promise of Canada.

To someone like me, the enduring promise of the new world and the enduring promise of a country like Canada is that it's one of the few places in the world where what you know is more important than who you know; where your father's name doesn't matter, but your ability does matter; where, if you're willing to work hard and willing to work smart, you will get ahead. That is the promise of Canada.

But I'll be honest: It's a tough promise to keep, because even in good times, human nature conspires against it, and in tough times, it's often broken. That's why, when people ask me, "Now that you're a newly elected member, what are you going to do for your constituents?" there's a number of things I can rattle off, but deep down what I really want to do is renew my commitment to this promise of Canada, to the ideal that the privileges and challenges that come with birth are tempered by a culture of meritocracy or, put very simply, a world where each of us has a fair chance at chasing our dreams and succeeding. I got that chance, but I know there are many who haven't.

In closing, all I'm going to say is that whatever success I've had is not just because I worked hard, although I did, and not just because I persevered, because I did, but also because at crucial times in my life perfect strangers took a chance on me: strangers like the vice-dean of admissions at the University of Toronto, who allowed me to do my MBA even though I was technically only a grade 13; strangers like the librarian who allowed me to borrow books past the due date without paying a fine, because she knew I couldn't afford those books; strangers who helped me in my nomination; the perfect strangers who walked into my campaign office and donated money and countless hours to help me get elected. To each of you who took a chance on me, all I can say is thank you for taking a chance on me. The only way I can repay you is to help others.

To my friends and family, you know and I know that I couldn't have done this without you. To the wonderful people of Mississauga East–Cooksville, all I can say is, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the wonderful privilege you've given me. I hope I'll be worthy of it.

Finally, I've been thinking that my story, at its core, is really a love story. It's about the story of falling hopelessly in love with this wonderful country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

1520

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here today and have my first opportunity in the new Parliament to say a few words, speaking to the throne speech.

Let me offer my congratulations to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville on her maiden speech. It was wonderful and heartfelt. Welcome to the Legislature.

Speaker, also, to you, my congratulations. Anything's possible in this place, isn't it? Remarkable. It's wonderful to see you in the chair.

To the other Speakers—I'm not sure who they all are yet, but I'm sure we'll find out in short order—congratulations to you and to all the other members in this place who are back here. Those of you who have been re-elected and were here previously: Welcome. It's nice to be back. Congratulations to everybody who made it through the election.

To the new members who are here for the first time: a special congratulations to all of you. As odd and as raucous, and perhaps even a bit dysfunctional as this place may seem at some times, it's still a tremendous place to be, and, I think, in very short order, that will become obvious to all of you, if it hasn't already. So I offer my congratulations to all of you, especially those who are here for the very first time.

Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity, as I said, to say a few words in response to the throne speech. I know that generally there is a fair bit of latitude given to members when it comes to this particular topic. I walked in during the speech from the member of the third party, and it sounded to me like she was focusing on home care, I think, and health care, and that's fine. We all get to have a bit of latitude here today when we speak on it.

I'm happy to speak a bit about the economy generally and where we find ourselves here in Ontario. These are very difficult times, I think it's fair for everybody to say—perhaps, it would be fair to say, even intimidating times. I know that we all have at least one eye on what's going on in the European Union today—a great deal of concern with what is occurring over there. The fact that, as an economy, we are so incredibly integrated internationally I think perhaps leaves some people wondering what it is we are able to do and what we can control, if anything, when it comes to how we manage and how we function here in the province of Ontario.

One of the members opposite referenced the forestry situation in northern Ontario. I think that's a great example of what many of us feel is beyond our control and the things that we cannot take care of. There are obviously always levers and inputs and policy pieces we can bring forward to try and help, but there are absolutely some things that we simply can't control.

When I think of forestry in northern Ontario—which actually predated the recession, which really hit home in 2008. When you think of forestry, some of the pieces that you can't control, that impact an industry—for one, currency. I've used this example here in the Legislature before. When we were elected in 2003 as a Liberal government, the Canadian dollar was at about 70 cents or 73 cents. Somewhere along the line after 2003—I forget exactly when; 2005, 2006, whenever it was—the Canadian currency peaked at \$1.10, a 35- or 40-cent increase in the value of the Canadian currency relative to the American dollar. What that meant for northern Ontario pulp and paper mills, at least for one in my riding, which was just called Bowater then—a one-cent increase in the value of the Canadian dollar represented a \$3-million to \$4-million expense on their bottom line—one cent; \$3 million to \$4 million.

As I said, we came in at about 70 or 73 cents. It went up at one point and peaked at about \$1.10. On the bottom line of one company—not even the whole company; just one operation, one Bowater plant—it added somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100 million of expense into their bottom line overnight.

A collapse in the US housing market: All of a sudden, your market's gone. Most of the sawmills in my neck of the woods were Buchanan mills, and 95% of his product—these are mills that had been around for generations—was exported into the United States. When the United States market disappeared, almost overnight—and still, to this point, still today, five and six years later, there is very little, if any, US housing market; still a glut of homes on the housing market. The subprime mortgage crisis has directly impacted that—again, another example of how, when we're looking at global economic forces, sometimes there's just not a whole lot you can do.

I raise these, Speaker, because, quite frankly, people are always looking to place blame. It's interesting that some parties place blame; other parties don't place blame. You get closer to the election and everybody's placing blame. But there are certainly some underpinning and underlying factors that everybody is aware of that you simply can't do a lot about. Those are a couple of them.

I wanted to start, at the beginning of my speech—I want to make one point too to have a little bit of fun. It's the throne speech. I just feel like I need say the word “Kakabeka.” I've got to say Kakabeka. During the election, one of the parties, Speaker—I won't say which one, but it wasn't the official opposition—decided that they were going to distribute a flier in my riding that said, “Mauro only raised the word ‘Kakabeka’ once in the previous eight years when representing the riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.” It wasn't the official opposition who put the flier out, but I thought I'd better say “Kakabeka” now for the third time so that when we get to the next election, maybe that's one less flier they will be able to put out.

They put out the flier, implying that Kakabeka was its own municipality. In fact, Speaker, Kakabeka is a little hamlet. It's a small core of a very popular place around Thunder Bay, just about 15, 20 miles west of Thunder Bay—a great little place to visit, a great little place to go, Kakabeka Falls. I would guess most people have heard of Kakabeka Falls. It's the fourth time I've said “Kakabeka” now. But what the flier didn't say, Speaker, is that Kakabeka—fifth time I've said it—is part of Oliver Paipoonge. Oliver Paipoonge is one of the ridings sort of southwest, contained within my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. It actually has about 5,000, 6,000, 7,000 people in it. It's quite small by population. Geographically, it's huge, but Kakabeka—sixth time—is actually contained within the municipality of Oliver Paipoonge. So I felt, Speaker, that I wanted to just get that a little bit on the record and say “Kakabeka” for the seventh time today in my speech. Hopefully—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Any hockey players from that area? National Hockey League players?

Mr. Bill Mauro: You know what? Mr. Leal knows his hockey. Yes. This is where the Staal family hangs around and came from: Oliver Paipoonge.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I knew that.

Mr. Bill Mauro: He knew that. That's why he prompted me to say it.

Anyway, Speaker, I thought I'd better get it in there. We've got to have a little fun in this place. We can't be too serious all the time.

As we go through this Parliament, Speaker—and none of us are sure how long it's going to be—I do understand and appreciate that it's different. Actually, I don't mind saying I'm a bit excited by that. I don't know what it's going to bring, but the fact that we're in a minority situation, I think, is going to provide for some very interesting times here in this Legislature. I'm looking forward to that. But I think what the people in the province of Ontario can count on from us in terms of consistency is what we've done for the past eight years. I think we can stand on our record.

The speech earlier when I walked in—I just flew in this morning and came in in the middle of the speech—was talking about a component of health care. I think that if people go back to 2003 when we were first elected as a Liberal majority government, people will know that over the course, from 2003 to 2011 now, health care has been and will remain the number one priority of this Liberal government. I think that if you canvass people, Speaker, and you ask them, almost always what their number one priority is in the province of Ontario, most of the people will tell you, is health care. Now, that may change from time to time. The economy, obviously, is at the forefront of what a lot of people are concerned about, but health care and education are almost always right up there in the number one and number two spots.

I remember that when we first got here, health care was consuming about \$30 billion on an annual basis. I think that now we are approaching \$50 billion; if not there, we're very close to being there. What's interesting about that \$50 billion: It is consuming close to 50% of the total provincial budget.

It's always interesting when we listen to the members on the other side—that's their job; they have to find fault with what we're doing, and that's fair. That's their job. They have to work very hard sometimes to find that. But when they pick on the health care system, Speaker, I think it's always an interesting choice.

I don't mind saying that I had somebody who is a long-time veteran of this place tell me a long time ago, "Bill, you need to remember, health care is always a political loser. It's just matter of how much." He says, "You can never win on health care. It's not about whether you win; it's about how much you lose." It's understandable, when you think about it. It's tangible. As a government, you're tied to it. People understand that you deliver it, and it's an extremely emotional exercise. Anybody who has ever interacted with the health care system—it's extremely emotional, and when you have a bad experience, you wonder what the province is going to do about it.

We should have a little more fun. We heard with some interest, in the leader's debate, when the leader of the third party described a particular interaction she had with the health care system, and it was a very trying and a very emotional—

Interjections.

1530

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, I—boy, that was amazing what a free pass she got on that one. I don't know how that happened.

Anyway, I take at heart the fact that it was an emotional experience for her, that it was very difficult and that she was speaking truthfully about how difficult an experience it was for her. That's the norm.

But from \$30 billion to \$50 billion—and, as has been expressed here, we anticipate that that, in these very difficult economic circumstances that we find ourselves in, is going to remain the number one priority for us as a Liberal government here in the province of Ontario.

In my local riding I can point to several examples that I'm very proud of, improvements specific to Thunder Bay—Atikokan when it comes to the health care system. The first that I'll reference—and perhaps the only one; I don't have a whole lot of time left; about four and a half minutes—is the provision of angioplasty services at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre.

I've been doing this work now for going on 15 years: six on city council and entering my ninth year here in the Legislature. I've made one very clear promise in going on 15 years, and that was in the election of 2003: the provision of angioplasty services at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences. It took us maybe three or four years to get there.

Previous to that provision locally, 500, 600, 700 people a year from Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario had to leave Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario and go to either Ottawa, Toronto or Hamilton for angioplasty services. Not all of them made it. The ones that did go oftentimes could not have a family member attend with them. An extremely emotional, trying, difficult time: If you were lucky, you went and you survived. If you were lucky, a family member could go with you, if they could make it, if they could get off work. If you were lucky, the family member could afford to go and be there with you. At the end, if you were really lucky, it all went well, you all came home together and you were healthy.

Now in Thunder Bay we're providing that service, and have been for three or four years. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 700 people per year from Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario receive angioplasty services at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. It wasn't happening before. Very recently, we just opened the second cath lab there. I think our government provided about \$10 million in capital money to the hospital. They just announced that opening—I was there; I think it was about six or eight months ago—a second cath lab. And now that number of 500, 600, 700 angioplasties on an annual basis happening at Thunder Bay Regional will be increased even more. That number is going to go up.

Speaker, it's good health care. It's local health care. It's saving lives. And as I like to remind the people in my riding, good health care policy can also be good for the economy. Associated with the opening of that angioplasty suite in Thunder Bay there are around 40 extremely good, high-paying health care jobs. The things to remember is that this isn't adding to the budget. This work was always being done but before it was being done in Hamilton or Ottawa or Toronto, and now it's being done in Thunder Bay. It is a piece that I'm very proud of and I'm happy to report on.

I just want to speak quickly before I wrap up—less than a couple of minutes left—on the debt. We announced just last week that we're on track. The elimination target remains the same. It's a big number; nobody denies that. But what I talk about a little bit when I talk about the debt is, if we look at Ontario in isolation I'm not sure that paints the best picture. It's not the best picture—

Mr. Randy Hillier: You're overachieving on the debt, Bill.

Mr. Bill Mauro: My friend across the way—I always like to remind him—here is the comparator I want to use: your federal cousins. I always say, let's talk about the federal cousins.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It's a big number. Somewhere along the road, he had a bit of a deathbed conversion.

I remember in 2008, on TV, the federal finance minister saying, when the recession was hitting, "Good buying opportunities." That's what he said on national television.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What'd he say?

Mr. Bill Mauro: "Good buying opportunities. Get in the stock market. People's pension plans are"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to go through the Chair, not have a direct dialogue across the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

People's pension plans were going through the floor, their life savings were going through the floor, and the federal finance minister said, "Jump into the stock market. There's good buying opportunities there right now."

My point is that somewhere along the line the federal Conservatives had a conversion. They began investing in infrastructure like we had. They came along late to help us with the forestry sector. They came along late to help us with the auto sector. Ontario, as about 40% of the country's economy, has, interestingly enough, a deficit and a debt that almost mirrors that proportion of our GDP relative to the national debt—somebody as predisposed, ideologically, against deficit and debt as we have probably ever had in the Prime Minister's chair.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from—I've lost it for a minute here.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You've got it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Elgin–Middlesex–Kent. Middlesex; sorry.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I think I have the toughest riding to remember the name of, but I'll wear a name tag or something. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville and congratulate you on your inaugural speech. Congratulations, and I'm proud to be part of the same group of MPPs coming to serve our ridings.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah, but did you like it?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I did like it. It was a nice speech.

I appreciate that you spoke about family—it shows good, strong character—and I'm glad people took a chance on you so that you could get here today. But I would like to make a note that I hope that you take a chance with me and my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London. We need to start bringing back jobs to my riding. We need to lessen the regulatory burden that's hampering our small businesses. We need to rein in costs and spending so that my riding has people, and their riding, to take chances on others coming to our communities, so that they can attain what you attained today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: First, I'd like to congratulate the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for your maiden speech.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Was it good?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It was good, it was uplifting and it was great to hear about your life and your election campaign.

With respect to the remarks from the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who said you can't win with health care, well, in fact you can win with health care if you do it right. Way back in the old days, when the LHINs were first formed, it was supposed to be a seamless health care system, so people could move from the various sectors—hospital to home care; home to home care; homes to the hospital—with seamless care. That hasn't happened. There were too many beds closed before the money was invested to make the home care system work. Then we did the contracting out of all those services through an RFP. What that led to is that patients get discharged too early from the hospital because there are no beds, and then they get readmitted because they shouldn't have been discharged. Then they sit in the emergency wards for 15 to 20 hours because there aren't any beds to admit them into the hospital.

When we changed the way home care was delivered, with for-profits, we saw fewer jobs, and so now we have a lot of part-time people out there actually working for two or three agencies, administering care to people without any continuity or sustainability—and the wages are substantially lower in the community sector than they are for the counterparts in the homes and in the hospitals, which is why you can't attract workers to that sector.

So I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Mario Sergio: York West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): York West; sorry.

Mr. Mario Sergio: That's close; that's close.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You've got to stop switching ridings.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Can't switch ridings. Mr. Speaker, by the way, this is the time for congratulatory messages all around, starting with you, and of course to all the members who have returned to the House and the wonderful bunch of new members that we have acquired in our democratic process. To everyone back in the House, new and old: Congratulations.

We are debating, if you will, one of the first items, Speaker: the speech from the throne. I've heard the various comments. I have to say, first of all, congratulations to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville and, of course, the well-established, long-time member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He's a champion for the north, and he's a champion for the people up north as well.

Speaker, there is one particular thing with the members who spoke before us, especially the member from Nickel Belt when she said that we have to have continuity. If I had to choose between health care and education, I would have difficulty, because I think they are two particular areas that we just cannot neglect. But the thing is this: If we want to really have continuity in any of the facets in our society here, then we have to make sure that we address each one individually and with care. If we give to one, we've got to take care away from something else. This is a particular time that requires special attention from every member of the House, not only the leaders, Speaker. It is a time when we have to really look into what we want to say or what we want to do, not only as individuals but as parties as well. I hope that this will be the tone we can look forward to and that we do the best we can for all the areas that govern our people.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan's comments. I found your comments about the exchange rate on the Canadian dollar and the American dollar and the impact it has on natural-resource-based industries very informative, very true and just a statement of reality on what a resource-based economy we have in this country.

His comments were directed at forestry, because that's the natural-resource-based industry where he comes from. In my riding, it is agriculture, and I have lived agriculture first-hand—I am a farmer. So when the exchange rate with our American neighbours goes up dramatically—and we are an export-based nation, based on our natural resources—it can be devastating. On the other hand, it can be wonderful when it goes the other way.

Also, I think we realize we are hewers of wood and drawers of water. We have resources, whether it's agri-

culture, forestry or mining, which is becoming huge in Ontario, and other resources in the nation. That's where our true prosperity comes from.

I found his geography lesson on Kakabeka Falls, which he mentioned seven times, because I counted—I'd be happy to witness that for you anytime. I haven't been there. It sounds like a wonderful place, and I thank you for that.

But since you mentioned the small community you're from, if you'll afford me some liberty, I'd like to mention a small community where I'm from, and that is MacLaren's Landing, where I grew up. It was established in 1826. I've said that once.

Your comments on health care and how expensive it has become—excuse my newness at this, Mr. Speaker; I should be addressing you. Yes, we know it's expensive. Yes, we know it's about 50% of our budget. But when I was campaigning in our election this fall, many people, including doctors, said to me, "What are you going to do about health care?" or "What should a government do?" Several of them said, "Whatever you do, don't spend more money. Use our dollars more wisely." In my community, at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, where my wife works as a nurse, she tells me a story that goes like this, and I think this is very revealing and interesting: There are eight—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Your time is up.

The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin, Speaker, by congratulating you. I didn't use the previous opportunity to do that, and I'm told that your being Speaker is a bit like the naughtiest boy in the class being made the monitor. So congratulations.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And you're doing a very good job.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, you are.

I'd also like to congratulate all the new members who made their maiden speeches today: the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Nipissing and Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I also want to just take a minute to say that I'm so impressed by the eloquence of some of the senior parliamentarians. I only hope that one day I'll be able to come close to that. Your ability to think on your feet and debate is pretty impressive.

I'd like to respond to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. First, thank you for listening to my speech, because clearly you were one of the few who was listening, and yes, I'd like to take you up on your offer to—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Nobody on your side was listening at all.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm sorry?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Ignore him.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yeah, ignore him. Forget him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I know the member is new, and I would just like to remind her that we don't have cross-dialogue; you go through me. Maybe the senior member took a little advantage of you there.

So maybe you'll come through me when you're talking. Thank you.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker.

Just continuing, I'd like to respond to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London that I'm happy to work with you to help Ontarians, to help create new jobs for all Ontarians. I think our government has a great record when it comes to that. We only have to look at other jurisdictions across the world to know how strong Ontario is doing relative to all other jurisdictions. I think we've got the track record and I'd be happy to work with you. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Congratulations on your appointment, Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak at this moment.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to be sharing my maiden speech as a well as a few comments to the throne intermittently throughout my speech, but I want to start off by saying that it is an absolute, sincere honour to be here representing the constituents of Huron–Bruce. It is a riding that is absolutely wonderful. I invite you all to tour it at some point. It's known as Ontario's west coast, and there's a reason for that. I will get to that in a moment.

My path to Queen's Park is shared with so many people. I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on that path and to thank the people who made this reality happen.

But first of all, I follow the footsteps of some very amazing people, and I respectfully share with you today that I'd like to recognize Helen Johns and Barb Fisher, and I'm even going to cross the floor and recognize Murray Elston and Murray Gaunt. Those names might ring a bell for some of you.

I have to recognize Helen Johns. She was a mentor of mine—

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much. Coming from the agri-food industry—

Hon. John Gerretsen: How about Carol Mitchell?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I haven't seen her for a while.

But going back to Helen Johns, I have to share with you that coming from the agricultural industry, there are people who claim and stand fast saying that Helen Johns was one of the best agriculture and food ministers this province has ever had, and I'm very proud of her for that. Both Helen and Barb continue to be great support for me, and I appreciate that very much.

I don't hesitate to recognize Murray Elston and Murray Gaunt as well. They're both from my home community. They lead by example. Murray Gaunt in particular I count as one of my mentors. Murray was very non-partisan. He held court. He represented the riding of Huron for over 15 years, all in a minority situation. He served everyone equally and he gave me my first opportunity to have a TV interview in my ripe old age of 18. He was the one who nominated me for the role of vice-chair with the Ontario 4-H Foundation because he

felt that leadership experience would bid me well in the future. I thank him for that.

I want to share with you as well—it is such an honour to represent Huron–Bruce because Huron–Bruce represents so much. They celebrate beans in Zurich, they celebrate strawberries in Lucknow, pumpkins in Port Elgin, maple syrup in Belmore, the hanging of the green in Mildmay, and they also celebrate Thanksgiving in Belgrave, where 1,000 people sit down at the same time to give thanks.

It's an amazing riding full of community spirit, and that's what I want to bring, as a representative of Huron–Bruce, into this chamber. As representatives of constituents throughout this province, this is a community where I believe we can work together and get some really good things done on behalf of the province.

But before I get into any more details on how I reflect on what we can do better or what we might be able to consider, I need to give thanks to my family, my friends, and members of my community I know and don't know who made this a reality for me.

First of all—I wear my emotion on my sleeve, so get used to that—I thank my husband. He is my best friend, my pillar and number one supporter for this opportunity. I couldn't have done it without you, Dennis.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

And his family, his children, Vanessa, Devin and Deidra, you've embraced this, you've seen us through it, and we've had a few laughs and some interesting times throughout the way as well. I have to tell you, Deidra was door-knocking with me one day. She came up to the door and she learned what it's like to door-knock. A gentleman said, "Of course, I'm going to do the right thing and vote for Lisa as my representative," so she asked for his phone number, and in all seriousness, he said, "Young lady, I'm married." That was her first real experience of door-knocking, but she learned the wonderful aspect of community in the sense that he was our old postmaster and he was having just a little bit of fun with her. That's how our experience together was kicked off.

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My immediate family—Dad, Mom, Dennis, Donna, Lori, Mike, Lana and the kids—I couldn't have done it without you. Your support and your inspiration and source of enthusiasm for this venture were just awesome. I think we did okay.

To Dennis's family, to the Schiestels: Again, I don't consider them my in-laws. They're my family as well. We had a lot of laughs, and they worked so hard. They are just salt-of-the-earth people who, when they believe in something, get behind it 100%, and I thank you for that. You know who you are.

Then I want to talk about community. You know, in my world, I have a variety of homes. I have "out home," where I grew up, near Belgrave. I have "up home," which is in the township of Howick, near McIntosh, where my grandmother lives and where my uncles live as well, actually. And then I have "home," where Dennis and I

reside. When the writ was dropped, it was just—I think that was my “pinch me” moment. There were signs up on the 10th Line of East Wawanosh. There were signs up all around where my parents live. When I turned onto the 6th Line of Culross, that was an awesome sight. From one side of the highway right through to county road 12, there were blue signs for that entire concession. That was pretty awesome, considering that line typically was of a different colour in a different election. I really appreciated the community support that came through.

With that, talking about community and family, I have to recognize my new family as well. My campaign managers, Ken Robertson and Doris Inglis: You were second to none. This campaign ran like clockwork. Your strategy was spot-on. It is all about feet on the street. With the organization that you built around me, we made it happen. Some of that organization also involved your spouses. Luanne and Dave, thank you for sharing Ken and Doris with me. I appreciate it and continue to appreciate it very much.

Because Huron–Bruce is so large, we actually broke our area into hubs, and we had three regional coordinators managing those hubs. Len Wallace: I couldn’t have done it without you. I loved your laugh and your heart behind it. Cassie, thank you for sharing him with me as well. Len and Cassie are from Port Elgin.

We had a dynamo couple in the Wingham area; we had Joan and Bob Middleton. It was just a wonderful experience getting to know you. Your support was awesome, and I appreciate your continued support as well.

In the south end, we had a gentleman whom we ended up calling a magician, because if you ever needed something done, somehow he made it happen. Burk Metzger, you were just awesome in your regional coordinator role in the south end of the riding. Thank you, Simone. I appreciated your support of Burk in this path and this adventure, and I certainly appreciated getting to know you better as well.

I have to share with you that those were just some of the folks that I was most in contact with. Brad Dent, my CFO, is really doing a great job right now, wrapping everything up. I’d like to thank Katie, his wife, for sharing him with me as well.

The important thing here is that I had over 300 people volunteering on my campaign. It was just phenomenal. I hope that I represented you well and continue to do so here at Queen’s Park. I couldn’t have done it without you. You’re my motivation for doing the best job I can.

That’s a little bit about my campaign and the people who helped me along my path to Queen’s Park.

I want to touch a little bit on my career as well, because I grew up on a beef farm. I was involved in 4-H. We did everything in the community that one would expect. It was all about fastball in the summer and hockey in the winter, and snowmobiling as well. But I knew, because I enjoyed my 4-H experience so much, that I would focus my education on a path that would allow me to have a position to apply as a rural com-

munity adviser with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I’m a graduate from the University of Guelph, and my summer jobs, actually, during my whole tenure at Guelph, were with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

One of my first jobs was junior agriculturist coordinator. Interestingly enough, I was 19 years old, and one floor above the minister’s office at 801 Bay Street, when I was interviewing young people from Toronto who wanted an experience on the farm so they could appreciate their food source. So here’s a 19-year-old interviewing 16-year-olds for an opportunity to spend a summer on the farm.

I jumped right in, and those were some great years. Not only did I give people experiences that they maybe would have only dreamt of, but I started building a network that continues to be strong and maintained through to this day, and a lot of mentors have helped me.

When I was working as a summer student, there were two agricultural representatives that I’d like to touch on. Their names are Don Pullen from Huron county and Carm Hamilton from Victoria county, which is now known as Kawartha Lakes. They bestowed in me, from that ripe old age of 19, some extension work values. Extension work, in the historical sense, is all about recognizing a gap or a need, building capacity and then getting out of the way to let that community take over.

When I was working with Carm in the Lindsay area, he asked me one day: “How do you know when you’ve succeeded?” I thought about it and I gave him the best answers that I thought he was wanting to hear. He kept shaking his head, and he said to me finally, “Lisa, you’ll know you’ve succeeded as an extension worker when they don’t need you any longer.” I was taken aback by that, but you know what? It really struck me, because even today, I think modern-day government could learn a thing or two about the old, historic perspective of extension work. We don’t want people to be dependent upon us; we want to be dexterous and deft so we can be responsive to the issues of the day. So we need to focus on identifying a need, building the capacity, and then getting out of the way of innovation and entrepreneurialship so this province can get back to the prosperity that we once knew it had.

That’s my little talk about extension work. It’s near and dear to my heart. It kind of propels me through everything I do to this day.

I worked for OMAFRA in the regions of Halton and Peel. I loved every second of it. One of my favourite aspects of that particular job was coordinating and managing 4-H leadership camps, where young people between the ages of 16 and 21 would define, identify and explore their leadership skills. It’s really interesting because, just today, I met with a provincial agricultural organization, and one of those people that I got to know through my capacity as a rural community adviser was here in a leadership role representing his agricultural organization. That’s what it’s all about. I take great pride in that.

After OMAFRA, I decided, “Hey, slow down long enough that I can think about my family,” and I met Dennis—again. With that said, Dennis is somebody that I have known since I was 15 years of age, and the interesting part is, our worlds evolved away from each other, as I pursued a career and Dennis worked at Wescast Industries in Wingham. As luck should have it, or the stars aligned, we found ourselves together again. So that’s my story with my husband.

One thing that allowed me to move back to Teeswater is that I was consulting with a young organization known as the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative. It was an organization that was seeking consultation around organizational development. I took on that challenge, and before I knew it, they were asking me if I would consider becoming their general manager. I said, “I grew up on a beef farm. I don’t know anything about goats.” And they said, “Don’t worry; we’ll teach you all you need to know about goats, but you know everything that we need to know about organizational development, and we also would benefit from your network as well.”

Ladies and gentlemen, 10 years later, I’m very proud to say that that co-operative has grown in Teeswater as one of its steadfast employers. There are 15 people on that team, and it’s grown into a multi-million-dollar operation that has economic impacts across the province. That’s what we need to be taking a look at as well as we look to grow Ontario and build a prosperous urban and rural sector.

1600

I should share with you that one of my last mentors I want to touch on is my grandmother. She’s 95 years old. She still lives on the farm in Howick township, near McIntosh, and she’s just the salt of the earth as well. But I have to tell you, when we were talking about the events of the first week, my grandmother even said, “At 95 years old, I can’t see myself really doing a lot of renovations, but I certainly would appreciate relief from my heating bills.” So she’s on the mark there.

Mr. Robert Bailey: A wise grandmother.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: A wise grandmother.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Very wise, that lady.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, very wise.

The fact of the matter is, I’m just an ordinary person who’s been blessed to have some extraordinary experiences. I became motivated to get involved in provincial politics because I felt that Huron–Bruce needed a clear, credible voice at Queen’s Park, and influence at the table should never be confused with a seat at the table.

These are tough times. Small-town and rural Ontario are tired of being pushed to the margins. We want to be active members on the team known as the prosperous province of Ontario. But I am fully appreciative of the fact that the province is mired in debt and is dependent upon transfer payments, which is a frustration of mine.

This is a time for a new era of leadership so that we have a sustainable economic vision. We need leadership that isn’t canned or contrived, highly partisan or mean-spirited. What I’m talking about is an entrepreneurial

style of leadership; a vision grounded in integrity, relevance, confidence and hope; a new kind of leadership that encourages people to try different things; and one that inspires stakeholders to adopt new approaches for their businesses, communities and their families.

I have to look back at the throne speech from last week and, Speaker, I have to say it was disheartening to listen to it and come to realize that rural Ontario continues to be left in the margins, because the notion of “rural” was not mentioned once. Even more disturbing: Not once during the kick-off of the 40th Parliament of Ontario was Ontario’s largest industry, the agri-food industry, even mentioned. This is not acceptable, and I hope we can make a difference.

Another perfect example of my concern, where rural Ontario is losing its voice, is again what happened last week when the discussion—or the decision—to strip viable jobs and associated economic impacts from rural Ontario was simply justified as “the buildings are too old.” That was it; no other discussion. That’s a concern of mine, because where is the cost-benefit analysis associated with closing the Walkerton, Owen Sound and Sarnia jails? Those people losing their jobs this weekend deserve better, as does rural Ontario and the taxpayers of Ontario.

I suggest to you, Speaker, that a prosperous Ontario requires a strong, healthy urban sector as well as a strong, healthy rural sector, and regarding rural Ontario, we need to embrace rural economic development values and principles that will restore capacity, opportunity and enthusiasm. This means big new ideas; it does not mean bigger, old-style government. The era of big government is over, ladies and gentlemen. Ontario—that means you and me—can no longer afford it. As the economy goes, so go the opportunities for the people in it.

I believe in small towns, I believe in rural Ontario, and I feel that we can work together to bring a strong economic plan during this 40th Parliament. I challenge our colleagues throughout this entire chamber to embrace this notion, because it is about our constituents that we’re representing. We need jobs, we need relief and we need to cut back wasteful spending. Again, I come back to the values that I embraced growing up: It’s about giving back to the community. As politicians representing ridings and communities throughout this wonderful province of Ontario, we can do better.

I’d like to reflect on the fact that my friend the honourable member from Timiskaming–Cochrane even called the government on it last week, reminding the Liberal government that the people have spoken and they no longer have a majority. So we have to be mindful of that and find a way to work better together.

Just to close: Again, Huron–Bruce is an amazing riding. Our main sectors are agriculture and food, tourism, manufacturing and energy. We need all of those sectors to keep our rural community viable. We need all of the jobs we can get, and invite people to get past the knee-jerk reactions and really do a thorough analysis on all the impacts that we decide upon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're all so excited. Isn't that beautiful? Look at that. Aw, that's so cute. Look at that. Beautiful.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There you go. Beautiful. Isn't that beautiful? I love that.

I just want to congratulate the member. There was such an affectionate display of emotion from the member from Huron–Bruce; it's good to see. Hopefully it will last for a long time. That's a hope that I have for her.

But what we have in common—Liberals, Tories and New Democrats—is the type of experience that the member described in terms of what it takes to win an election and who works for you—family members, friends, children, other folks that you met along the way; these are the people that make a difference for your election. We all have that in common. So in that respect, it's good to articulate it, to express it here so that we all share in the commonality of that experience.

What is also beautiful is how we are different. I'm going to hopefully have the 20 minutes soon to be able to share some of my ideas and some of my differences with my brothers here on the right-hand side.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Come on; you're all the same.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, please. No. You, Minister, are much closer to them than we ever will be. You are so close, you're indistinguishable. Why, when you talk about corporate tax cuts, it's a question of how much closer you are to them than you will ever be to us. But we'll have a chance, Speaker, to get to those—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the Attorney General, if he wants to have cross-dialogue, to please take it outside. Thank you very much.

Questions and comments? The member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, sir, and what a delight it is to see you in the chair today. Congratulations on your official appointment. Also, congratulations to the member from Huron–Bruce on her maiden speech. Welcome to this place.

I actually have some connections to the Huron part of your riding; my daughter-in-law is an Exeter girl, so a Huron girl, and in fact my campaign manager is also a Huron—at least, she grew up in Guelph but her family all live in Huron county, so I get to hear lots about Huron county in my family and political travels.

But I did want to point out and maybe take issue a little bit with the impression you left that the Ontario Liberals really haven't been doing anything for rural Ontario, because we brought in, in the budget last year, a risk management program that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the agriculture journalists in my local newspaper are calling the most significant support for Ontario agriculture in generations.

We had the chicken farmers here today. In fact, we'll all be going off to visit them shortly. Again, they're talking about how staunch our support has been for the supply-managed sector that chicken is part of and the fact that they're looking at how to grow what is a very successful industry between the chicken producers and the chicken processors—a real success story.

1610

One of the things I got to do just recently was a local food announcement with the Ontario goat and veal producers to help market foods for local goat producers—so, something in your industry there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member for—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a former Liberal riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would it be South Glengarry—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Thanks. Sorry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to also congratulate the Speaker on your role—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Jim McDonell: From Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Ideologically we may be on different sides—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I've been informed that the member is not in his seat.

Interjection: How could that be, Paul?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's why I probably got it wrong.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's right. I knew it wasn't your fault, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You confused the Speaker. You have to speak from your seat, member.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I will continue. I congratulate you on your new post.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Jim McDonell: As I say, ideologically I know we're on different sides, but I can see your co-operation. I think it's appreciated by three sides.

I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Huron–Bruce. I think it was a great maiden speech, and she made us feel very much aware of her riding. I had the privilege, on a summer job, to work at the Bruce nuclear plant. I'm somewhat familiar with the riding and the great people from there. The people must be commended for making such a wise choice of a member.

A rural background is something I share. Rural people tend to come through harder times and know the importance of paying their way, and I can see that my colleague was truly brought up that way. I think it's important in Ontario to get back to the principle of making sure we can live within our means, and if we don't start living within our means, we will soon not be able to

afford the necessities that we've seen to be important in this province.

I know that I can look forward to great things from my colleague. The people of Huron–Bruce have chosen wisely, and the people of Ontario will be the benefactors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to extend my congratulations on your appointment as Speaker. The seat suits you well.

I'd particularly like to extend my congratulations to the member from Huron–Bruce. I'd like to congratulate her on her victory, and I particularly would like to draw attention to the fact that my colleague acknowledged those who have put her here. She took the time to acknowledge the volunteers, friends and family. I think we should all remember who sent us where we are and, in all things we do, always remember that it's for them: the constituents, the volunteers, the people who worked for us. That's whom we're the voice of, and that's whom we're here to represent. We should always keep that in our minds.

I'd like to extend my congratulations once again and also my appreciation of the fact that my colleague has the humility to acknowledge that by ourselves we are nothing and that with support, with our family, with our volunteers—that's the only reason we're here today.

In addition, I'd like to say that when it comes to the issues that affect Ontario, it's also important to recognize that when times are difficult, when times are hard in an economic downturn, it's in those times that it's most important to take care of those most vulnerable. It's in these times that we must recognize that the most vulnerable need the most support and the most protection. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First, I want to thank my colleagues in the chamber for their comments. I appreciate them very much.

As I said before, I wear my heart on my sleeve, and I work very hard as well. What you see is what you get.

Hon. John Gerretsen: How about Carol? Talk about Carol.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm being asked about the former member. I can honestly say I have never, ever heard from her to this date.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to address the comment made by the honourable member from Guelph. While I truly appreciate the ag policy that has been introduced just this past year, I feel it's very important to underline the fact that good agriculture policy does not translate into thorough rural economic development policy. We need to have policies that embrace both opportunities for the agri-food industry as well as a vision and a strategy to keep our Main Streets open. I don't want Huron–Bruce to be known as a riding that has boarded-up Main Streets when people are passing through to go to their cottages along Ontario's west coast. That's not what I want, and I

know my constituents don't want that either. Again, I repeat myself: We need a thorough plan to sustain rural economic development, of which ag policy is a part.

We also need to keep mindful of the fact that we need a vision and we need a commitment from the Ontario government to sustain a viable rural Ontario. We need to have transparency so that when communities are losing their one and only school, they can have good conversations with their board of education so that they can understand the economic impacts of why the school is being closed, because, honest to Pete, once a rural school closes, that is an economic driver and we'll lose our support in our towns.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say we have an absolutely brilliant leader in Andrea Horwath, but it was a stroke of genius—

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, absolutely, but it was a stroke of sheer genius that put you in the chair, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that you are doing a superlative job and that we're very pleased to have you there.

I also want to take just a few minutes to follow the member from Huron–Bruce, because I didn't get a chance to do a two-minute hit on her comments. I was a minister in Huron–Bruce for two years. It was my settlement charge. I have to say the people there are phenomenal and it truly is the west coast of Ontario. So congratulations and welcome to the House. You represent an amazing riding and some amazing people. Say hi to them.

Now to the meat of the matter, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's a joy and a privilege to be here speaking again on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park and, I have to say—and of course I'm biased—the most beautiful riding in all of Ontario, just there: High Park, really. They sent me here to do a job and they sent me here with a message. I can tell you that most of the people of Parkdale–High Park represent that 99% that we've been hearing about in the news. You've been hearing about it because of the Occupy movement. But what I'm looking at in this chamber, Mr. Speaker, is a government that represents the 1%. They do it incredibly effectively, but that's what they do.

So as someone representing the 99%, let's start off where it counts. Let's start off with an incredibly shocking fact, and that is that, really, the one who is dictating the economic policy for this government isn't even in this chamber. He's not even in this chamber. The 108th member, if you will, of this chamber, unelected, is a gentleman who comes from a banking background, a gentleman to whom we are paying \$1,500 a day to inform this government about what it should be doing.

Now, the good people in Parkdale–High Park have many good friends. It's coming up to the holiday season. We think about who we love, our good friends to whom we're going to give. I can tell you not one of them is

thinking of their banker this season, Mr. Speaker, and I'll tell you why: because most of them are in debt up to their eyeballs, as are most Canadians. Who do they owe that money to? Banks. They owe that money to banks, and if the interest rates bump up even a percentage point, we have people in my riding who will not be able to pay the rent and feed their children or pay their mortgages; we have seniors who, despite the much-touted tax credit, which I'll get to in a few minutes, will not be able to pay their way in their homes.

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Those are bankers. He's a banker. This is like asking the fox how to build a cost-efficient henhouse. One would question the fox's motives. One would question even the structure of the design, because foxes and hens don't have the same view of the world. A banker who's earning \$1,500 a day does not have the same view of the economic world as a mother on social assistance who is trying to raise her children. He does not have the same point of view as a small business person who represents 90% of the new jobs created. Small business, Mr. Speaker—not big business, not banks, not their major corporate customers, not the government's major corporate sponsors—creates 90% of the jobs in Ontario.

No, he doesn't speak for small business. I'm talking to small business people all the time in my riding. They're hanging on by their fingernails. One told me, off the record—a leader among small business owners—that there isn't one small business anywhere in the GTA that's not for sale if the price is right, and the price is anything that pays their rent—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister is not listening to the end of the sentence. The ministers aren't—Mr. Speaker, how can we conduct business when they don't listen?

So, what he said at the end of the sentence is this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the Attorney General to cease and desist from his behaviour.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What he said is that the price would be right if it paid the rent and it paid for their principal costs alone—no profit whatsoever. That's the state of small business.

It's funny that this government didn't consult small business. They're not being paid \$1,500 a day, Mr. Speaker. They didn't consult the woman on welfare when they wanted to look at economic answers. She could use the \$1,500 a day. They didn't talk to people like contract faculty who aren't getting paid at our community colleges. I see the colleges are coming to lobby us this week. I've got something to tell them: They didn't pay them \$1,500 a day to give them some economic advice. So the question really is, whose economy is it?

Very clearly, when you hire a banker to tell you how to run an economy, chances are it's going to be an economy that's favourable to banks. Call me crazy. Now, if they had checked with someone else, you might get a little different answer about who this economy is sup-

posed to work for. You might have gotten a slightly different answer.

You know, we just came through a period where 1,500 cities around the world saw hundreds of thousands of people gather in their main squares, streets and parks, and the one thing they all had in common was that they were tired of the 99% paying for the 1%. They all thought—and, by the way, they're not alone; even Warren Buffett and Bill Clinton agree with them—that the 1% might actually be able to pay a little bit more. But that's not this government's response. That's not their response. In fact, \$600 million in the last couple of years has gone right to corporations. We're looking at, by the way, billions more going to corporations. For what? For boxes at SkyDome—Rogers Centre, excuse me—for luxuries like taking clients out to lunches.

Now, if I go back to the woman on welfare, if I talk to contract faculty workers, if I talk to the small business owner and I tell them that some of the wealthiest bankers, insurance companies, large corporations, which, by the way, are major funders of the party opposite—he who pays the piper, Mr. Speaker. If I told them that there are yet more breaks going their way, and the small business owner said, "But all I wanted was an extra 0.5% off my taxes," or the woman on social assistance or the woman trying to make ends meet on minimum wage—just the minimum wage that would get her to the poverty level. Then you ask them to pay even more taxes, a regressive flat tax like the HST that's going to hit the poorest the worst. Then you say, "But, you know, we need your taxes so we can keep supporting the Don Drummonds of the world, because \$1,500 a day has got to come from somewhere." It's got to come from somewhere. It's going to come from HST off essentials for the seniors. It's going to come from HST off the essentials for those just making ends meet. That's where it's coming from.

The largest shift in Ontario's history from the wealthy to the middle class and the poor is the HST; the largest shift ever in our history. And you know what? We have the highest rate of poverty ever since the 1930s, too. You know, maybe there's a correlation between some of the policies on the other side of the aisle, with the Don Drummonds and the large corporations and the fact that the middle class is emptying out.

You know, I always tell a story when I'm speaking to constituents or any group about the economy. I always say, I grew up in Toronto, a Torontonian born and bred. I've lived here all my life except for a couple of years in Ontario, and quite frankly, my family in those days—and I'm old, Mr. Speaker; I'm getting older by the minute in this place. In my day, on one salary you could own a home in downtown Toronto and a car in the driveway and pay it off, and the lucky among you—and many were that lucky—could have a cottage, too, on one salary.

Now, our children's generation, on two salaries—two salaries—if they're lucky, in downtown Toronto maybe they can scrape together enough to get a condo. They'll never, probably, own it—on two salaries. And certainly, only the Don Drummonds of the world can afford a

cottage. My goodness, you have to be wealthy to afford two homes in Ontario now. That's in one lifetime. That's how far we've fallen. That's how far behind the eight ball we are in this province, and that's on our children's shoulders. Imagine what it will be like for our grandchildren if this trend continues.

In that Occupy movement another theme that kept coming up again and again was the fact that not only is education profoundly expensive now, but that even with a BA, even with an MA, even sometimes with a doctorate, you can't get a job in your field. So here we are in Ontario with the highest tuition fees in Canada, the highest student debt in Canada—we should be ashamed of that—and you can't find a job once you get that degree. Well, you could find a job, maybe, but it's a McJob.

This is a government that brags about the jobs they've created. It's nothing I'd brag about in the province of Ontario, because we know the jobs they created. We know the jobs they lost: a quarter of a million or so. Those are good, highly paid manufacturing jobs. We know the jobs that have been replacing those jobs, and they're contract, temporary, part-time; many, minimum wage. That's nothing to brag about.

This is a time of crisis in our province. It's a crisis on every front, the economy being, of course, where we focus most. A crisis in jobs, a crisis in the economy, a crisis for the 99%. Most people are living paycheque to paycheque. Most people are one salary away from losing their home or their apartment, if they're renters. That's the reality of our province, and the jobs are being sent south, they're being sent overseas. They're not being kept here. We're losing our manufacturing base. This is the reality.

What we need is political will. We need a government that has political will or—hey, the voters sent us back with a mandate. They sent us back with a mandate this time. They said no to a Liberal majority. That's what they said, by the way. They said no to a Liberal majority. They said yes to co-operation, negotiation, working together to actually make life easier for the average person. That was the mandate we were all sent here with, each in our own way. We don't want a one-party state; none of us do, please, I hope. Come on. We were sent here with different political perspectives to work together, to bring those ideologies together around the table to try to figure out where we could agree to make life easier for the average family—not for Don Drummond, but to make life easier for the average family. That was the mandate the good, solid, hard-working people of Parkdale–High Park sent me to do. That's the mandate they sent me here with.

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They said, “We're sick of the partisan bickering. We're sick of the brinksmanship and the one-upmanship.” What they said was, “Get together. Come together and work, just once, for the 99%”—not for the 1%, but for the 99%. That's what they sent me here with, Mr. Speaker. They sent me here with a mandate—the one

thing we all agree on, in my riding—to make life more affordable for the average person, to make life more affordable for the small business person, to make life more affordable for the woman making minimum wage or on social assistance, to make life more affordable for the senior, to make life more affordable for the contract teacher, to make life more affordable for the vast majority of Ontarians.

Not once in the entire campaign did somebody say, “I want to make life a little richer for my banker.” Not once did I hear that, nor did I hear, “I would love to take economic advice about my life from a wealthy banker”—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You did?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Not once.

Not once did they say, “The person I think who really has a handle on the economy is a senior banker who will be paid \$1,500 a day for his advice.” Not once did I hear anything remotely like that. What I heard was, “Please, please say to everyone there, ‘Get together and speak for the 99%. Get together and speak for me and, quite frankly, even those who work in banks, not those who head banks; those who work in hospitals, not those who head hospitals; and those who work in home care,’” like you heard so eloquently from our new member and from our health critic.

We are standing here for them. They are the ones who elected us. They truly do wonder at why, all of a sudden, someone who was never elected, someone who never had a vote cast for him in his life that I'm aware of, is now dictating economic policy to our friends across the aisle. They wonder at that, and they also wonder why a government faced with a \$16-billion deficit, not to mention a true debt of a third of a trillion dollars, is paying said someone who was never elected \$1,500 a day to give them advice.

Again, I come back to this: Not once did I hear from any of my folk, who are thinking about the holiday season and gift-giving, that anybody was going to give a gift to their banker. Not once did I hear from my folk that the person who they really, really turn to—a person they run from is their banker, not turn to. They run from their banker—you know, the one who holds that little plastic usury—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In Biblical times, it was considered a sin, usury, those interest-rate-bearing cards.

Not once did they say, “I'm going to send a gift to the guy who owns my MasterCard or my Visa,” because most Ontarians are up to here with debt, and they would like to run from the bearer of that debt. That's what they'd like to run from. Yet here we come to this lovely place—it's a charming place, it's a beautiful place. And here—hah—the person they're running from is the person advising the government on economic policy.

We will do our best in the New Democratic Party to represent those who sent us here, the 99% who sent us here, who actually would like to see some collective political will to make their life a little easier. That's all they ask. They didn't ask much. “Make my life a little

easier. Do something for me”—that’s what they asked us. They asked each one of us, and each one of us is going to have to return to our riding to face those same people—maybe sooner, maybe later, we don’t know—and they’re going to say, “What did you do for me?” Quite frankly, I know that we in the New Democratic Party are committed to saying, “This is what we tried to do and this is what we tried to do and this is what we tried to do.” I’m sending a wish, a Christmas wish, over to my friends across the aisle. I’m hoping that, with their assistance and their help, we can go back and say, “This is what we accomplished for you, this is what we did for you,” not just for the Don Drummonds, not just for the bankers, but for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: You’re right, Speaker. Thank you very much. You’re a quick study.

In response to the member from Parkdale–High Park, we are debating the speech from the throne, which is a guide of what the government intends to do in the next year or so.

I think we all have to be very much aware, Speaker—some of us, by the way, in this 40th Parliament are in a position others were in during a majority. But I think this is a very special time for all the members in the House, Speaker, at this particular time—how things will evolve in a minority government, if you will.

I concur with the member that, yes, we should be doing a number of things. But if we are to call on every member of the House, not only in representing our own constituency, but this is a time when we have to all work together on behalf of all the people of Ontario. Because whatever we decide not only affects the people in Parkdale or in York West, it affects the entire province of Ontario. More than ever, it’s important that we deal with the issues at hand: health care, education, long-term care, nursing, daycare—all wonderful things.

But you know, Speaker, one thing that we very seldom say in this House is that we have one taxpayer. I love my seniors. I love giving more to the people working in hospitals, in nursing homes and the assembly lines. Of course there’s no member that doesn’t want to do that. But the reality is this: Where are we getting the money from to give it to someone else? I think this is where we have to come together.

I hope in the days and months ahead we can all work together on those very issues, Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated our member from Parkdale–High Park’s passion and her commitment to her constituents, because I too see where she can wear her heart on her sleeve as well. I particularly appreciated how she astutely pointed out the follies of the government source of economic consultations as opposed to listening to the folks in Ontario that really matter. I congratulate her for pointing that out because I agree with her.

We need to make life more affordable in Ontario for the average family. We need to get rid of government waste, we need to create more jobs and we have to make life easier, in the sense that folks are paying too much. They’re beyond their means.

I come back and revisit the conversation that I had with my grandmother, Laurine Wright. At 95 years of age, she wants to see realistic policies. At 95 years of age, she has no intention of renovating her home, but she would like relief on home heating bills. So well done on that.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: She might need a ramp.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: She doesn’t. You don’t know my grandmother, so don’t comment unless you know her.

But with that said, I have to say that the member for Parkdale–High Park is spot-on when she’s calling out our government for not listening. And again, it was her colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane that pointed out to the government that they no longer have the majority government, so it would behoove them to start listening.

I also would like to extend an invitation to our colleague beside the member from Parkdale–High Park to certainly come and visit Huron–Bruce. Again, I will indeed share your warm greetings with the good people from Kippen on your behalf. Good job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say this: I agree with the member from Parkdale–High Park 99% of the time on her speeches that she gives in this Legislature, and on this one, 100%.

I also want to respond to the member from York West, briefly.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I thought you would have said 99%.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, there’s always a little difference. Not much.

But I want to respond to the Attorney General and the member from York West as well, because they both say that we’ve got to work together. But it’s a funny thing, because when we say we’ve got to work together, they disagree with us.

But here’s the problemo: Tories and New Democrats—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member—not any cross-dialogue—to go through the Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Always through the Speaker. Remember, through the Speaker, even if you don’t look at him.

The point is this: We passed a bill just the other day, Tories and New Democrats, and remember, the population supported these two parties and we have greater numbers than you.

It was a profound mistake, I’ve got to tell you, that the Liberals made, not to listen to the other side. See, if I

were the Premier, I would have said, “The Tories and New Democrats agree on this particular measure, and that is that they should take the HST out of heating costs, and we are going to listen to the will of the majority of people who elected those two parties.” Instead, he and all of you chose not to listen.

It’s a serious problem, because when you say we’ve got to work together but two parties made a serious effort at working together on one issue and you all decided to oppose it, you’ve got a little problem of credibility. You’ve got to remember that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to offer a couple of minutes on the remarks by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I’ll begin, I think, by talking a bit—she referenced, as has the member who just sat down, the private member’s bill last week in the Legislature that passed this House, and the member from Huron–Bruce was referencing that as well.

If memory serves me, the member who introduced the legislation quoted the relief to be about \$100 annually, and so I think it’s important for us, if we’re going to talk about that, to put on the record that I guess that comes out to about 25 or 30 cents a day of relief for people in the province of Ontario should that have passed, because, as usually is discussed in this place when we talk about this issue, they talk about the HST but they don’t talk about the fact that the provincial portion is not the full HST. It’s not the full 13%; it’s less than that. That’s the part that we have some impact on. So I think it’s important just to remind people that that comes out, according to the math used by the member of the third party in his legislation, to about 25 or 30 cents a day. I mean, it’s not that it’s unimportant. It’s just that I think it provides some context for the discussion.

The other thing I’d like to say is that the member originally spoke, again, about the debt and the situation that we find ourselves in in the province of Ontario. I spoke a bit about that in my 20 minutes earlier this afternoon, but what we never hear coming from the opposition is some of the projects that occurred in their ridings that they would have preferred we not go forward with.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, we’ve got a whole bunch of things that went forward that did probably contribute to the debt but that I wasn’t going to fight against, I’ll tell you that—one of them being Bombardier. There are 800 more people working at Bombardier today than there were in 2003—the total is about 1,200 now—about 800, many of that directly related to investments we made as a government.

I’m not going to fight against those. One of those was a \$1.2-billion contract for subway cars here in the city of Toronto, very good for the city of Toronto, voted against by some of the Toronto members.

Those are projects I’m not going to vote against. I’m going to advocate for my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all the members for their contributions and their responses.

Listen, I live in hope; I really do. I live in hope and approach this minority government situation with great hope and expectations. I hope that we do work together. I hope that my friends across the aisle do come around the table and see that, again, when the majority of Ontarians have in fact given us the majority of the House, that means something and our opinion counts for something.

We’re at the very beginning of a session, and I look forward to some initiatives from this side of the House coming into law, because that’s what we’re here for, and that’s completely possible in a minority government. I’m looking forward to working with them to strengthen their bills, to bring things to their bills by way of amendments that perhaps they didn’t think of. Again, in a minority government, that’s completely possible.

The good voters of Ontario sent us all here and said, “Please negotiate. Please sit around a common table with a common aim—that is, our welfare—and please come to some common aims and actually see them put into law.” That’s what we’re all here for, Mr. Speaker—all of us—and we all have something to contribute.

The truth does not lie anyplace here; it lies in our cumulative effort, hence the owl and the eagle in this House. Keep the government to account. That’s what we’re charged with, here in the opposition. And the government is charged with listening to the opposition to keep them to account. That’s all the voters ask for. I think that if we did that, people would vote more frequently. People don’t vote because they don’t see that.

So I live in hope. It is the season. Let’s all get along. Let’s have some peace. Let’s get some work done.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I’ll be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

As I listened to the speech from the throne last week, I was reminded of the many achievements of the Liberal government over the last eight years.

One of the things that I really have to think about is that probably in the last five years, because of early intervention in our high schools and because of giving credit to young kids who have strengths different than academic strengths, we probably have 60,000 to 70,000 more youth who have graduated from high schools than would have happened under the old system. This was part of the education plan to give these young people this opportunity, to get them through high school and into trades and jobs, and to really be positive. That 60,000 is a small city of people who would not have had that opportunity under the old system.

Another thing that’s very important to me is the 55,000 more children this year who will be going into full-day kindergarten—extremely important.

I have three grandchildren. Logan is five, Keegan is three and Macey is six months old. Logan is now in his

second year of full-day kindergarten at Arc-en-ciel school in Orléans.

It's just amazing: His parents speak a bit of French, but he went into a full French school, and you know what? He already speaks French in less than a year and a half. He loves his school. He's an advertisement for full-day kindergarten. Imagine: He's well on his way to being fully bilingual. He loves his school, and it's tremendous training they get, all that fourth and fifth year. He's certainly going to be ready for grade 1 next year.

One of the things in today's paper, the Toronto Star, November 28: "Study puts Ontario students on top: Grade 8 scores above the national average.

"Ontario's grade 8 students are outperforming their peers across the country in math, science and reading, according to a nationwide study.

"Results from the 2010 Pan-Canadian Assessment Program test show Ontario is the only province whose students were above the national average in all three subjects."

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That's wonderful—and that's on top of the findings of the international body that has named Ontario one of the world's best-performing school systems: "The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which has been tracking education attainment in 32 countries across the globe since 2000, placed the province high on its ranking of successful school systems." I think that's just wonderful news about our school system.

Some seniors may not be able to take advantage of the home renovation tax credit, but that's going to be a great tax credit to get more seniors—certainly, I'm thinking of improvements I can make in my home right now. It will create 10,500 jobs and \$800 million in home renovation activity, and it will help seniors stay in their homes longer and benefit taxpayers by relieving pressures of long-term-care home costs. We all know that the long-term-home-care home costs and the costs in hospitals are just atrocious, and if you talk to the seniors—this was said already today—they want to stay in their homes as long as possible. That's where they're used to living; that's where they want to live. This will be another thing that will be helping them in addition to our aging at home strategy, which is going forward.

One of the things that I've been speaking of and working towards in the last eight years is a greener province. We certainly have achieved that. We're going to be out of coal—one of the reasons I'm really, really pleased that I got re-elected again—I think it was great news that night—was my passion to create a better understanding of the environment and the effects of our actions on it. There's a new report by the International Energy Agency just out, and the IEA says that the trends of energy use and the failure to begin reducing greenhouse-gas emissions worldwide has put the planet on a trajectory to a "long-term global temperature increase of more than 3.5 degrees Celsius." This is why it's so sad: 2 degrees Celsius was looked at as something that maybe, with adaptation, we could do something about,

but we've gone much beyond that now with our CO₂ in the atmosphere. It's much beyond the 2 degrees. We should be going back towards that.

The reason I'm speaking about it today: The throne speech is what I am to be speaking about, but I think it's very important that we have the United Nations meeting in Durban, South Africa, to try to work out a new deal. Of course, true to our federal government's stance—and this is Jeffrey Simpson, and I think he writes in the Globe. What does he say here? "Renewables such as wind and solar will make small gains in the total energy mix. They need large subsidies, and critics have a field day assailing those subsidies. What critics forget, but the IEA reminds us, is that fossil fuels around the world are estimated to receive subsidies of \$400 billion a year."

That's true. Our federal government is giving the tar sands project approximately \$1 billion to capture, transport and store the CO₂. Well, everybody knows that that doesn't work, and they're going to find out that on a macro scale, it does not work. Because subsidies are given to coal and to oil, they should be there for wind and for solar as well.

"Moreover, the pollution from burning fossil fuels is not captured in their pricing, which constitutes another kind of hidden, huge subsidy. Include the price of pollution in the retail price of fossil fuel energy, and the playing field with other energy sources would be made somewhat more even."

Jeffrey Simpson does great articles on climate change. He understands it; he has written a book on it. I think he's right on here. If we look at all the hidden subsidies that the fossil fuels get compared to what we're giving to solar and wind, we'd be on a much easier footing.

"Expect More Climate Upheaval, Panel Warns Nations"—this is another article; this is the Ottawa Citizen, November 19. Climate change, we know it's coming. We know the weather is really getting—here we have Kent. I understand Kent is in Durban, running the climate change policy for Canada. He's the Minister of the Environment. "I'd be delighted if I came back with fewer fossil awards than John Baird or Jim Prentice"—that's his challenge, to come back with fewer fossil awards—"Kent said, referring to previous Conservative environment ministers who were ... presented with the awards, and even won the Colossal Fossil of the Year award at least twice. 'We're going in good faith, not to obstruct.'" Well, I wonder.

"However, Canada wants no part of a second Kyoto ... Kent said," adding Canada is in good company with Japan, Russia and the US. The Durban talks start today. They'll go on for two weeks, and Canada, as usual, will be trying to block any movement towards mitigating climate change.

This has always been one of my larger interests here in Toronto. I do a lot with the schools as well. It is important to get that information out to the kids because, as adults, we have not been able to deal with it. What they want to come out of Durban with today is that there be nothing done for 20 years, which takes us past the 3.5-

degree warming stage. This is what world scientists say. This is 99% of world scientists and the international group that monitors it. Can't they understand that we're taking the wrong attitude in Canada? Thank goodness we got out of coal. We'll be out of coal completely.

But just look: We reduced our greenhouse gases by about 26 megatonnes per year. And you know what? The problem is that in 2007, the tar sands produced 40 megatonnes of greenhouse gases, so any reduction in Ontario is more than offset by the greenhouse gases in the tar sands. In 2020, it's estimated that the tar sands will produce more greenhouse gases than Belgium, which is a nation of 10 million people. They put out 131 megatonnes per year; the tar sands will put out 140 megatonnes in 2020.

So this is something that I am passionate about, that I work with. I will be coming forward with a private member's bill in the same light.

I'm glad to give up my time to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand here and to comment on the speech from the throne, and I'd like to do this from the perspective of the city of Mississauga, which is much more than Ontario's third-largest municipality. Our city is home to more people than the city of Vancouver, something that I state because that was the city I lived in before I moved to Mississauga. In fact, each day some 50,000 more people commute into Mississauga to work than commute out of Mississauga to work. To go back to the city of Vancouver, our city of Mississauga is home to more jobs than the city of Vancouver.

And while I'm on the city of Vancouver, I also have to say: Way to go, Lions, Grey Cup champs for 2011!

Now, Speaker, we're a dynamic, growing, diverse, hard-working and cutting-edge city in Mississauga. Our people look to their government as partners in getting settled, getting educated and trained, getting ahead and sharing our skills and our prosperity. That's why our city can look ahead with growing confidence at the speech from the throne of this, Ontario's 40th Parliament, and urge all other members to implement its ambitious measures.

Mississauga residents voted Liberal in October. That's because Mississauga residents have learned that our government respects and works with our city and with our overlapping federal members, and Mississauga residents know that the people they send to Ottawa, to Queen's Park and to city hall all understand that it's still the same taxpayer. Mississauga residents have seen that when their MPPs make a promise to them, we keep our word, and we'll do what we say that we're going to do.

Since 2003, when the residents of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville first elected me as their representative in the Ontario Legislature, western Mississauga has seen the kind of change that our communities need to grow, to prosper, to innovate, to learn, to build a home and to raise a family.

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In 2003, I teamed up with Mississauga Ward 9 Councillor Pat Saito on our need for a new GO train station in the fast-growing community of Lisgar. Councillor Saito had worked for 12 years to serve northwest Mississauga through successive NDP and Conservative governments. They hadn't listened, and we didn't have that station. Working together with GO Transit, with the city and with our government, we got that project announced, not in 12 years but in 15 months. Then GO Transit and our government worked with Lisgar residents and with the city to get the project completed ahead of schedule and under budget. Today, I take the train from Lisgar to Queen's Park myself from time to time—promise made, promise kept.

In our western Mississauga neighbourhoods, some 15,000 people move in each and every year—15,000 people. We need our health care. We need it to be up to date. We need it to be working. Nine years ago it wasn't up to date. Our Credit Valley Hospital still operated, nine years ago, the 365 beds it was built with when Mississauga's population was half of what it was in 2003. We needed to expand our maternity suite. We were delivering some 5,500 babies in a facility designed for half that number of deliveries each year.

We got that funding for phase 2 of Credit Valley Hospital in 2005. We got the construction started ahead of schedule. Credit Valley Hospital delivered the redevelopment of the A and H blocks, ahead of schedule and under budget this year—a promise made and a promise kept.

Along the way, we brought in three new linear accelerators for cancer treatment ahead of schedule. Our hospital budget has grown to meet our community's needs. We have more doctors and nurses. We're building a new medical academy at the University of Toronto at Mississauga. We have a family health team. That's over and above the commitments our government and our MPPs have made and kept.

Our community is the beneficiary of the skills, the work ethic, the resources, and the entrepreneurial drive of men and women educated at the expense of the taxpayer of countless other countries. These Canadians residing in Ontario needed then, and still need today, measures to help them restart their careers, create jobs, and build wealth. They needed measures in 2003 that were timely, cost-effective, fair and transparent. Our residents got that help in 2006 with the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act—a promise made and a promise kept.

That's also a large part of why, this summer and this fall, our campaign workers in western Mississauga spoke nearly two dozen languages. They were and are Canadians and proud Ontarians, residents who are building our community and creating jobs here in Ontario. One thing they aren't: They're not foreign workers.

Ontario is keeping its promise and ours in three other important ways: funding for Credit Valley Hospital's phase 3 to expand urgent care and to add an ambulatory surgery centre; a new major redevelopment of

ErinoakKids, which is the largest children's treatment centre in Ontario; and funding for new facilities in Mississauga, in Brampton and in Oakville, announced in May of this year. We need that major expansion of Ontario's largest children's treatment centre. We need it on time, and we'll deliver it on budget.

Finally, part of our government mandate is to implement all-day, two-way GO train service: promises made and promises that will be kept, all of them.

Mississauga is one of the world's pre-eminent places where the world comes to innovate. Let's take a look at a few examples. Baylis Medical, quickly becoming a gold standard for physicians around the world as it provides safe and predictable left atrium heart access—they've marketed their products in more than 60 countries. Where is their home? The city of Mississauga.

UCIT Online Security provides wireless cameras that record around the clock and can be controlled over the Internet, making it possible to use them anywhere in the world.

Temporal Power is a company based in Mississauga. It develops electrical energy storage systems for highly demanding applications, and what this means is that, with their flywheel energy storage system, they're able to hold 50 times as much energy as most commercial systems currently available on the market.

This is the kind of innovation that we need in the city of Mississauga. This is the climate and the spirit that this speech from the throne is building—not merely in our city of 800,000 hard-working people, not merely in our communities of Lisgar, Meadowvale, Streetsville and in neighbourhoods like Erindale, Cooksville, Dixie, Clarkson and Port Credit; this is what we're building in the entire province of Ontario. We're building a culture and an entrepreneurial system here that will enable Ontario to build on its strengths.

We don't look at this province as being a loser like some of the others in this House have said all through the election. We believe in Ontario. We believe in our province. We believe in its people. And in Mississauga, we believe in our hard-working citizens. We know that with the right tools, we can empower them to be everything that they came to Canada, came to Ontario and came to Mississauga to be. That's what this speech from the throne is all about. That's the kind of Ontario that this speech from the throne aims to build. And that's the kind of society that Ontarians said loudly and clearly on October 6 that they wanted to have in their province.

They don't want an attitude that says this province stinks. They want people who are going to advocate for the 13 million people in our family of Ontario. That's where this speech from the throne is going, and that's why the 800,000 citizens in the city of Mississauga look upon Ontario's 2011 speech from the throne as their gateway to a prosperous and a rewarding future. That, Speaker, is why I'm going support this 2011 speech from the throne.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll get this right this time: Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hold education near and dear to my heart, as I mentioned earlier today. We have a great system in Ontario. We can educate as many people as we can and get them graduated, but the problem is, there are no jobs for them when they graduate from university or college. Let's work on fixing the system in Ontario and bringing jobs back to Ontario. Let's fix the apprenticeship ratio so that we can create more trade jobs, so that we can create more jobs for the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

And it would be nice with this seniors' tax credit if, in fact, seniors had the money to pay for it, but right now they're struggling to pay the bills. Why not support the removal of the HST from our heating bills so that we can affect all Ontarians, so they all have a break, so they all have more money, so they can get our local economy stimulated.

And I'm a true believer of fixing this environment and global warming, so why won't the Liberals follow through on their 2007 promise and close the coal plants? Let's start working here. Let's quit blaming the federal government for our—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I had a good hot dog for lunch. I'm just—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Let's get global warming—let's look at our own problems. Quit blaming the federal government. Let's close those coal plants.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Once again, I'd like to reiterate my wishes that there be less talk across the aisle. Let the member make his statement. I don't want to have to name anyone.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I've lost my spot, but I will continue.

Interjection: Start over again.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'll start from the beginning.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like, hopefully in a year from now, to congratulate the Toronto Argonauts, who are hosting the Grey Cup next year, that we have the Grey Cup home in Toronto.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I was listening to the throne speech and am pleased to hear that the government is listening to good ideas. I was happy to hear the member from Mississauga–Streetsville mention transit, but I didn't hear any mention of public transit in the throne speech.

Today is a big day in our city of Toronto. It is budget day, and we have more bad news here. We are losing transit in our city—10% across-the-board cuts in our city. This is not efficient use of space or energy. We're going to be taking buses and streetcars off the road because we won't pay the operating costs.

So I do have a good idea for the government: Why don't we fund operations for public transit in this city? We used to do this back in the day, before—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The NDP used to do it.

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Mr. Jonah Schein: The NDP used to do it, before the Conservatives cut the funding. That funding has never returned, and we still are paying the price today.

In addition to lost routes, regular folks are paying more for their transit starting January 1. On top of that, it was announced that we're also getting a property tax increase. This is chronic neglect from the Ontario government: not funding our cities, not supporting people here and not standing up for public transit. We know that this makes good sense, to fund public transit. It works for the environment. It's an equity issue. It means that everybody in this city has access to the city. But it's inequitable when people can't afford to get on a bus or when they have to wait in line for a bus, and when it does show up, it's too crowded.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope that the government will listen to this good idea, that everybody will agree with this. Across this city and in municipalities across Ontario, we need public transit. We need to pay for the costs of operating it, and we need it now. People across this city are extremely upset about what's happening here, and the Ontario government does have a role to play to reverse this. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to congratulate the members from Mississauga–Streetsville and Ottawa–Orléans for their comments.

I want to focus, if I can in my couple of minutes, on the comments primarily from the member from Ottawa–Orléans, who, for the past eight, going on nine, years now, has spent a great deal of his time advocating on issues that he spoke to, that being a green economy, reductions in greenhouse gases, carbon emissions and the like. He spent a great deal of time on that. What it makes me remember is that in 1995, the Harris government very proudly committed to no longer being in the mass transit game. So the theme that's coming out here this afternoon, they very publicly—that's their position. You can defend it. I'm not here to criticize it; I'm just saying they did it. In 1995 they said, "We're not doing that." In the 2003 provincial election, as part of an environmental policy in the province of Ontario, we very publicly and very clearly committed to enhancing mass transit in the province of Ontario to get people out of their cars and into mass transit.

The member who just spoke: Boy, I wish I had the numbers in front of me. If I could capture the total commitment that this Liberal government has made to mass transit primarily to the benefit of Toronto, it is really quite remarkable.

Another piece that was just committed to in the recent election was, of course, our commitment for all-day—is it all-day two-way GO Transit service between—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thirty minutes, Toronto to Hamilton.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thirty minutes, Toronto to Hamilton. The reason that that resonated with me, as a member

from Thunder Bay–Atikokan having the Bombardier plant, as I just said earlier: 800 more jobs; they are now up to 1,200 total. This commitment to two-way all-day GO Transit service in the bi-level cars required to meet that demand is going to be, I'm told, about another 600 cars over the next six years or so. All of that work is going to come out of my plant in Thunder Bay–Atikokan for those Bombardier workers. So when it comes to a commitment to mass transit in the province of Ontario, we're happy to compare our record to just about anybody's record in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further? The member from Huron–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, but you're getting there. It's right next door, and it's a great spot to be.

I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville on his election. It's been interesting to hear him speak about his support of the throne speech, and I have a couple of questions that I just need to ask.

So you've talked about jobs, and I have to say I'm totally disappointed that there wasn't one word in your throne speech about agriculture. Let's not forget that farmers feed cities. Where was one word about what you're going to do? It was great that you brought out the risk management, ironically a couple of weeks before the election, a long time beyond the four years that you could have implemented it.

You've talked about keeping your word numerous times in your speech. What about the gas plant? Is it on? Isn't it on? What's the cost going to be when you finally either build it or destroy it and demolish it? We just need one answer there.

I'm pleased to hear—and I congratulate you on funding for your hospital. Over a number of years ago, Markdale was promised \$3 million for the planning of their hospital. In your throne speech the other day it's not even on the five-year list. Those people came to the table from Markdale, raised \$13 million, which sits in a bank account today while their dilapidated hospital falls down around them. When will you commit to making Markdale a reality?

You continue to talk about committing and making promises and keeping them. I think I continue to read and hear that you do not. You go back on your promises. You do not come forward and do the things that you say you will do in my riding, and that's why I believe we retain the riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for a 22nd year.

Rural Ontario is listening. Rural Ontario is watching. Take a look at the map and look at the promises made, the promises kept. I would suggest that you are struggling in your ability.

We need to focus, my colleague, Mr. Speaker, and all of the colleagues in this great House, on reining in spending, getting our deficit in order and ensuring that Ontario is once again the thriving economic engine of our great country. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Davenport, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their enlightening comments.

To the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London: I congratulate you on your election, sir. You talked about a fair number of things; not many of them were in the throne speech and certainly none in the remarks that I made. You did mention the coal plants, which will close in 2014, on schedule: another promise made and another promise kept.

To the member for Davenport, he is simply factually incorrect in his assertion that there is nothing in the speech from the throne on transit. Let me read to you, sir, from the speech from the throne. It says, “Your government has already committed to new transit in Toronto, Ottawa and Kitchener–Waterloo, a new subway to York University and Vaughan, and a rail link between Pearson Airport and Union Station.

“The next step in that transit plan will be the introduction of two-way, all-day GO train service—which will help keep Ontarians living in the GTA and greater Golden Horseshoe moving while creating 68,000 new jobs.”

Just to make sure, I’ll ask page Owen here to bring you a copy of the throne speech. You’ll find it on page 5. I urge you to read it.

To my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan: He definitely outlined to the House how my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans, a great and a very experienced member who’s well respected in his community, has made such a difference in eastern Ottawa and certainly talked about how Ontario has picked up the challenge of public transit after years of NDP and Conservative neglect.

Finally, to my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, congratulations to you, sir, on your election. Will the member—my question to him—support the risk management proposals that will so generously benefit our agricultural community?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I have to say first I will be sharing my time with the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I have to also say that the House is a little bit quieter when you’re in that chair compared to the other chair. But I’m looking forward to such thoughtful guidance from the Chair with you in it today.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I’m sure when you listened to the throne speech being delivered and in reading it and comparing it with the actions of this Liberal government, the only word that really comes to mind is “befuddled.” “Befuddled” is about the only way we can describe this throne speech.

I heard the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan earlier bemoaning that they can’t do anything, that there are things beyond their control. There was a multitude of excuses about why they can’t do things.

On page 2 of the throne speech, “Ours is a time of significant global change, upheaval and uncertainty....

“We don’t fully know what the global economic uncertainty means for Ontario....

“Simply put, our world has entered into a time of slower growth.”

I went through the throne speech. Thirteen times they refer to the global economic situation—13 times. Lucky number 13. On page 2, there are eight references to global economic factors. When will these people on the Liberal side wake up and just not make excuses? Excuses are not reasons.

I say, let’s compare the reality. In Saskatchewan today, their wages and incomes have risen above Ontario’s. They’re in the global economy too, aren’t they? Aren’t they in the global economy? Newfoundland went from a have-not to a have province. They’re in the global economy, aren’t they? We went from a have to a have-not province.

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Our unemployment rate is above the national average—8.1%—and it’s been like that for five years. Last month, October, we lost 75,000 jobs. This Ontario Liberal government has become a drag on Canada’s economy. You’ve become a drag on Confederation. You’ve put us into a have-not position. And all we get from the Liberals is, “My hands are tied, my hands are tied. It’s the global economic fiasco.” Doom and gloom. You know what? That’s a good phrase.

Here’s a page from the Toronto Star: “Ontario Faces Four-Year Recovery.” And Robert Benzie and Rob Ferguson say, “Doom and gloom in Ontario’s economy will linger for another four years.” Well, I think Rob Benzie and Rob Ferguson got it wrong, because these guys are not going to last another four years. The doom and gloom will not last another four years, because this Liberal government will not last another four years. But as long as they’re here, there will be doom and gloom in Ontario. That is without a doubt. That is undeniable.

I have to also say that it was interesting, again, reading this befuddled throne speech and seeing the actions of the Liberal government. Now, we know they’ve brought in this home renovation tax credit, which will give seniors a benefit—not everybody; just seniors. They’re bringing in change that will give a benefit to some students. So some seniors will get a benefit, and some students will get a benefit.

If you go to the throne speech on page 9—maybe I should send this over to Bob so he can read page 9 as well—this is what the throne speech says: “Your government rejects the politics of division and rancour and will oppose measures....” And what do they do? The first day after reading that throne speech, they bring in policies of division; another befuddled, contradictory, hypocritical position of this Liberal government. It’s just on and on and on: On 13 different occasions in here they make up excuses why they’re failing Ontario, 13 different phrases in here that try to show excuses as reasons for the Liberal government’s failings and failure

of the people of this country and the people of our province.

Again, more unemployment, diminishing wages. And what did the Premier of Saskatchewan have to say this week? The Premier of Saskatchewan has—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Peterborough on a point of order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, traditionally the use of the word “hypocritical” has been ruled inappropriate language in this Legislature, so I’m asking you to rule on the use of that word by the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Actually, the Speaker has been nailed on that one. You will withdraw that comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I will withdraw that comment.

Speaker, the Premier of Saskatchewan, Brad Wall—of course, his province has moved from have-not to have status—was quoted earlier this week as encouraging Ontarians to come to Saskatchewan, where there is indeed economic growth, where there are robust job opportunities. Isn’t it just amazing that Saskatchewan will now be the haven and the place for Ontario residents to actually find advantages, prosperity and economic opportunities?

I have to say this, Speaker: My family came to Canada in 1950 from Newfoundland. At that time, Ontario was a “have” province. Ontario was the land of opportunities. Well, I’ll tell you, there are a lot of Newfoundlanders going back to Newfoundland now from Ontario. They’re now the province of opportunities. This Liberal government has killed—suffocated—prosperity and opportunities for all people in Ontario.

Really, Speaker, they have to recognize that it’s not only Ontario that they’re harming; they’re harming our whole country. They’re harming the economic prosperity of our country, and all they do is come up with excuses and more excuses and think that that justifies them continuing on the same path of politics of division, politics of rancour, politics of envy. They just keep coming up with more and more policies to split, divide and harm our opportunities.

Speaker, befuddlement is the real word for this throne speech—and doom and gloom, as the Toronto Star has set forth. As long as this Liberal government has that tenuous hold on government, there will be doom and gloom, but we’ll do everything possible to make sure that that doom and gloom ends quickly, and the same with this Liberal government.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. It’s an honour to be here in this House after 20 years, when I served as a legislative page. It’s amazing how fast time flies.

I wanted to take a moment to offer my most sincere congratulations to our Speaker on his recent election as Speaker. Indeed, with the first minority government in a generation, thanks to him for offering to let his name

stand and accepting the challenges that our minority government will present.

Allow me to also offer my thanks, congratulations and appreciation to former Lambton–Kent–Middlesex MPP Maria Van Bommel. Ms. Van Bommel is a friendly and active member of our community and served the residents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to the best of her ability for nearly eight years. During this time, she served in important roles, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I thank her for her service and thank her for her commitment to the residents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Speaking of campaigning, I must express my thanks to those who volunteered and worked on my recent and previous campaign. Allow me to recognize my riding president and campaign chair, Mr. John Fraser; my campaign managers, Mr. Joshua Workman and Mr. Don Adams; my campaign CFO, Jennifer Grover; and my campaign advisers, Peter Twynstra, David Crone, Henry Weirisma, Rick Devolder, Bill Graham, Betty Ann and Jack MacKinnon, Jack Biernaski, Eileen McCoy, and the other volunteers, activists, donors and members of our riding association. Without their efforts and help I would not be standing here today as the MPP for the great riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

But most of all, I want to take time to thank my wonderful and loving wife, Kate Bartz, for all of her support over the years and for her assistance in helping make this dream a reality. Kate is my best friend, my best adviser and my strongest supporter.

The great riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is unique and diverse and is located west of London. This rural riding in southwestern Ontario runs from Lake Huron in the northwest to the Thames River in the southeast and Lake St. Clair in the southwest.

As one of the largest ridings in southern Ontario, it contains the towns of Strathroy, Wallaceburg, Southwest Middlesex, Lambton Shores, North Middlesex, Lucan Biddulph, Middlesex Centre, Brooke-Alvinston, Dawn-Euphemia, Warwick and my great hometown, the village of Newbury. A portion of the city of Chatham-Kent lying northwest of the Thames River also falls within the riding. It contains several native reserves, including the Chippewas of the Thames, Kettle Point, Walpole Island and Oneida.

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Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is home to many small businesses, many family-owned for almost 100 years. The major source of employment is in the manufacturing sector, followed closely by agriculture. Indeed, I am very blessed and humbled to have been elected to represent such a diverse riding and a diverse group of people, and represent them is exactly what I intend on doing. You see, residents of my riding, like all ridings of Ontario, have been extremely hard hit by the current economic challenges facing Ontario. With regular plant closings, job losses and other announcements continuing, many families in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex are having trouble making ends meet.

Residents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex have sent me here to be their voice and their representative here in this House. They have sent me to bring solutions from home to Queen’s Park and they have sent me to make positive change to affect the lives of many in my great riding. They elected me to stand up for our three hospitals: Four Counties Health Services in Newbury, Sydenham hospital in Wallaceburg and Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital in Strathroy. I am proud to represent the people in my riding, people who work hard, pay their taxes, play by the rules and contribute to the communities they love. Standing today and delivering my inaugural speech to this House is an honour, but it is more of an honour to represent the great people and great families of my riding.

Although today is my maiden speech to this House, I would like to provide some comments and feedback on the recent speech from the throne and its content. You see, Mr. Speaker, I am extremely concerned that the recent speech from the throne, Dalton McGuinty’s speech from the throne, has failed to address both Ontario’s job crisis and Ontario’s debt and spending crisis. Since the election alone, our provincial deficit has increased by a staggering \$1 billion. Indeed, with this speech, Premier McGuinty is adding \$2.5 billion in new government spending to our growing deficit.

As you will also know, Ontario families reduced the governing Liberals from a majority down to a minority while sending an expanded PC caucus to Queen’s Park to stand up for these priorities: to stand up for the priorities of everyday families, to stand up for the priorities of families in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and throughout Ontario. It is a job that I am proud to have and a job that needs doing.

You see, Mr. Speaker, it is vital for the health and welfare of our great province that we reduce spending, reduce the deficit, pay down our debt and begin to grow Ontario’s economy again. Ontario was once the engine of our great confederacy, the driver for all of Canada, but of course, those days are not here at the present. But all hope is not lost and can’t be lost. We can return our province to greatness.

Mr. Speaker, our party has introduced an amendment to Dalton McGuinty’s speech, and as you know, we are working hard to address our jobs crisis by reforming our apprenticeship system to create 200,000 skilled-trades jobs, something that will make a major impact in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. The Ontario PC caucus is also working hard to address Ontario’s debt crisis by calling for a legislated mandatory public wage freeze. Where the voluntary wage freeze of this government has failed, we will deliver.

Over the weekend, I was home in my riding and had the opportunity to speak to residents throughout Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I told them that unfortunately, I would be voting against the throne speech unless Dalton McGuinty supports our PC amendment to freeze public sector wages and create 200,000 skilled-trades jobs.

As a former three-term municipal councillor and now the proud MPP from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I entered politics to help find solutions, to make the tough decisions and to get Ontario back on the right track again. It will take hard work, it will take sacrifice, it will take dedication and it will not be easy, but the rewards, the prize of all of our efforts, will be exceptional and is badly needed for all of Ontario.

My parents, Gary and Susan McNaughton, raised me to have a strong voice and a determination to work to improve the lives of others. We do it every day at our family business, McNaughton’s in Newbury, where we proudly employ over 65 people from throughout the community. My family has a long history of public service, from my great-grandfather Hugh McNaughton, warden of Middlesex county; to my grandfather John Duncan McNaughton, who was one of the founders of the Four Counties General Hospital in Newbury; to my aunt Diane Brewer, who is the iron lady of Middlesex county and has served as reeve of Newbury for over 26 years; and now myself. It is my hope, my aspiration and my goal to serve the people, to honestly represent their wishes and desires, and to work to improve and restore our great province of Ontario.

My grandfather, whom I never had the chance to meet, as he passed away before I was born, had a quote on the back of his business card that read, “I expect to pass through this world but once. If there’s any kindness or any good deed I can do for my fellow beings, let me do it now, for I may not pass this way again.” These are words I intend to live by.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time here today, and I thank the other members for their attention and support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I’d like to extend my congratulations to the member who just spoke. I’m also a new member, and I appreciate standing up for the first time here.

That might be most of what we share in common, I think, because I too have not heard about the need for real public investment to stimulate our economies, to make sure that we have the kind of province that is sustainable and viable. But in response to the member previously, too, who wanted to correct me, indeed, I was noting the fact that there was no money in the throne speech dedicated for operating costs. It’s all well and good to show up and do ribbon cuttings and capital unveilings, but what is the point of having public transit if we have no operating costs to actually make those trains run? In fact, the Eglinton LRT is something that the NDP has long supported; we were building underground transit back 20 years ago before my friends to the right decided to fill in that hole.

But when we are talking about new investment in public transit, we do need to talk about the fact that this government cancelled a huge amount of funding to a public transit strategy that was well researched, that was well thought out. It was called Transit City. It would have served the entire city of Toronto very well. We are

now left with a transit plan that is not working, and we're still waiting to find the money to actually make it work.

When we talk about the ARL, the rail link to the airport, this is not something that I could brag about in my community. We are going to be sending hundreds of trains from Union Station to the airport each day, and those trains are going to contaminate and pollute our neighbourhoods; 300,000 people are going to be affected by these diesel trains. People in Davenport are completely opposed to it. They have not been properly consulted; they have not been listened to. Even the medical officer of health from Toronto has said that this is an environmental and a health disaster.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all congratulate the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and particularly the kind words that he had to say about his predecessor, who was a great presence in the House here for eight years.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It doesn't matter whether or not the individual was a Liberal MPP, an NDP MPP or a Tory MPP: All of us bring something of ourselves into this House and all of us want to do the best for this province. Yes, from time to time we may see the world a little bit differently or what it needs in order to deal with the issues that we have—it needs different answers etc.—but I respect each and every member of this House, both present and in the past, as to what they've contributed to this. The worst thing that we can do is badmouth individuals that have gone before us or not say anything about them at all.

What I found so interesting was the contrast between what this member had to say in a very positive way about what he wants to contribute here and what the other member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington had to say, because he was pretty negative about this province, if anything else. I resent those kinds of comments because I am absolutely convinced that the people of Ontario, indeed most of the people of Ontario—as a matter of fact, how we are regarded elsewhere in this Canadian Confederation that we have is that we are still the main part of Canada. We are still the engine of Canada. We will always be that way. Even though we may be getting some equalization payments from the federal government at this point in time, let us not forget that we still put an awful lot more tax dollars into the federal coffers than any other province. As a matter of fact, we still put \$25 billion a year more into Confederation and into the federal system than we are taking out. So we are a definite, positive influence in this great country of ours.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First off, I'll say to the member for Kingston and the Islands that I don't think the member from

Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington was having his maiden speech, so he can be a little more pointed in what he's saying.

But first of all, Speaker, I want to welcome the 31 new members to this Legislature. I will not forget the first day that I entered this House, this chamber, and how daunting, but special, it was. And when I had that opportunity to make my maiden speech, that was truly something I will never forget.

I want to reference my friend from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. We have a lot in common, Monte and I. Both of us were Home Hardware dealers. Yeah, Home Hardware dealers. Both of us served on municipal councils before we had the honour of being elected here, and I think that's important as well. And both of us had families that had long political involvement as well.

You can tell by Mr. McNaughton's maiden speech that he's going to make a tremendous contribution, not only to this chamber and to the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, but to the entire province of Ontario. I look forward to a very bright future from this young man, a little bit younger than myself—

Mr. Norm Miller: A lot younger.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I say to my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka, do we have to make a point of it? Yes, he is a little bit younger than me but I see a great future here and elsewhere for Monte McNaughton. And we've waited for Monte for quite some time, because he was a candidate in the 2007 election as well. And I say, yes, his predecessor, Maria Van Bommel—you couldn't find a nicer and a finer person. But this is the nature of politics, and we're proud to have Monte on our team, we're proud to have him from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and we're proud to have him representing here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to begin with congratulating as well my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I think it's important to note that in his speech he did, as the Attorney General mentioned, acknowledge his predecessor, and it's a show of class; it's a very classy thing to do, and I think that we need more of that in this room, in this House. I hope to join my friend in adding more civility and more class to our dealings in this House, because that's the way we can ensure we do the best job for our constituents. So I applaud his civility and I applaud his classiness.

With respect to my other colleague from Lennox–Addington and his comments, there were some comments about the fact that we've lost 75,000 jobs. I concur; we have lost a great deal of jobs, and any jobs that we have created have been temporary and part-time. That's my largest concern: the fact that the jobs that have been replacing these good-paying manufacturing jobs have been part-time, temporary and precarious jobs.

In my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Mr. Speaker, there are many people who are working in the same

factory, year after year, under temporary job agencies, without the benefits that they're entitled to, without good wages, without benefits. This is a serious concern, and I heard nothing in the throne speech that addressed this concern, the fact that we need to take care of those who are facing temporary work, who are facing precarious employment. We need to change that into good-paying, full-time jobs and transition it so that people in Ontario can earn a decent living and can live with dignity in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has two minutes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the members who spoke after me from Davenport, Kingston and the Islands, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—my good friend John Yakabuski, and as Mr. Yakabuski mentioned, a fellow Home Hardware dealer—and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. Thank you very much. It is an honour to be here in this House in Ontario.

We've put forward, as the members know, amendments to the throne speech. We have a jobs crisis and we have a spending crisis in Ontario. We put forward ideas. It's time that the government listens to our ideas.

We continue to hear in the press about lip service being paid to the opposition parties to making this Legislature work, but I urge the government and the cabinet to seriously consider the consequences facing Ontario if we don't get our government spending under control. I mean, a day before the election, the deficit was \$15 billion; a day after the election, the deficit is \$16 billion.

It's a concern for our kids and our kids' children, so I just urge the government to begin working with the opposition parties and to start listening to the same constituents I'm talking to. We need a new path here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. What I would like to do before I begin is to introduce Francesca Zielinski, who is the daughter of the member from Parkdale–High Park—she's right there—and her friend Jason. Welcome.

I missed this place, I have to tell you, because I miss talking to the public. I miss when I say, "Welcome to this political forum. We are on live, and it's a quarter to six, and it's Monday."

I want to try to be nice. I really do. I make an effort, because you have to make an effort. And given that there wasn't much in the throne speech, it's so easy to be nice, because there's so little there to attack. There was nothing in the throne speech except the predictable things—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry, John?

Mr. John Yakabuski: But you'll find a way of attacking, I'm sure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll do my best, because I'll find a way to attack the Tories as best as I can from time

to time, especially when I show the links between the Tories and the Liberals.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know. You're quite right. And we have had one close link in the last week. It was just a week ago where Tories and New Democrats agreed. It's hard to believe, I know, but we agreed that we should remove the HST on heating because heating—we agreed with Tories. It's a surprise that Liberals do not agree that the HST—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: John, I'm just about to say how we agree. Let me work on it.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, Speaker, of course—always.

We came to an agreement—an accord, as it were—with Tories that the HST is a bad thing, particularly as it is applied to heating. We say that in this northern climate, this is a huge cost to ordinary folks, a huge cost to people who don't earn a lot. You heard the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who was talking about—I'm going to get to that in a few moments. A whole lot of people are living precariously. That's something we should worry about.

But we, the Tories and New Democrats, agreed last week, and between the two of us, we have 54 members—more than the Minister of Health claims, because she often wants to say, "But we are elected to govern." This is true, but we, between us, have more than you. It's something for you to remember every now and then when you say you want to work with the others, when you say, "Audi alteram partem."

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: "Hear the other side."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see, you've got to hear the other side from time to time. I'm not saying all the time; understand me. But every now and then when you say, "Work with us," we say to you, "Work with us too."

Last week, we gave you but one example of how we can work together, and you decided that you don't want to work with us. You can't have a one-way street here. You need for the doors to be open every now and then—don't get me wrong: where we can agree. And you will be reminded that the electorate voted for 54 members who are in the opposition benches. Don't forget it.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yeah, but not the majority.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a majority over the 53, now 52. But all I am saying is when you, individually, collectively—when the Premier says, "Work with us," we want to say to you—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —Attorney General, "Work with us, too," because we can't work with you if you don't listen to us; you understand that. It's a very simple formula. Every now and then we're going to work with you, and I suspect even the Tories will work with you from time to time, particularly when you talk about tax

cuts for the corporations, because when you say, “We want to continue cutting corporate taxes,” the Tories are going to be right behind you—not the New Democrats, but they will. We are talking about a mutual relationship that we will have from time to time, and in order for you as a government to have some credibility, you have to listen. If I were the Premier, I would have said this—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know I’m not the Premier. But if I were, I would have said the following: “I respect the will of the two opposition parties who have been elected—the 54 of them—to listen to the needs that have been expressed by both political parties,” and on this one, while we disagree, were I the Premier, “We’re going to listen to what the other two parties are saying.” That’s what I would have said.

Imagine the credibility you would have had as a party—imagine. You could have said, “It will cost some dollars, this is true. But we are going to share the cost that the other two parties have made because we feel that what they’re saying reflects a significant portion of the population, and as such, we will respect the will of the opposition parties.” That’s what I would have said, but I’m not the Premier.

Mr. David Zimmer: You never will be.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ah, you see? You see, member from Willowdale, this is where you are wrong. You were so close. Many of you were close to losing your seats, and indeed, this slim majority that you have as a government—you must never forget—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You’re quite right, Berardinetti, you’re quite right. But the point is this: Things move around. From time to time, people change and governments get booted out of office—mercifully, I say, because this is a good thing. From time to time, every political party has to be given the boot, because that’s how you learn. See, Liberals now, at the federal level, are learning what it takes to get back into power. I can see Bob Rae just scratching his way up to try to be the leader of that Liberal Party—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That’s not what I’m talking about. I am talking about your current interim leader, desperately wanting to get back into power. They have been taught a lesson at the federal level.

It’s a good lesson because Liberals have nothing to say anymore. When the NDPers stop giving you ideas, you’ve got nothing to say. That’s your problem. Not only have you had a series of bad leaders, you’ve also had a deficit in terms of policy ideas. Between the two of them you are lost, wandering about, trying to find a saviour to bring you back to power. You see, that saviour is not coming. He ain’t coming, and I think it’s good, and it’s a good, tough lesson for Liberals to learn. God bless, I say. Actually, the member from Parkdale–High Park would say that more than I would, but it’s okay. It’s okay.

We often hear in this House—by Tories and Liberals, dare I say—that we don’t have a revenue problem; we’ve

got a spending problem. I hear that from the Tories all the time. Isn’t that true?

Interjection: That’s true.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah. The Liberals used to say the same thing, by the way. It’s okay.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Were you here in 1990?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That’s too far to go, I realize. The Attorney General—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, the Speaker is not happy with the dialogue going across and forth. We come through this party, thank you very much.

I would remind the ministers in the front: Set a good example for your new members.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ain’t that something? It’s beautiful. I love it.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This is one good Speaker we have here, I’m telling you. I’m impressed. I really am.

Anyway, through you, Speaker, to them, of course, in case I forget: We’ve got a revenue problem. This is where we disagree with both of those parties over there to my left and the right. We have a revenue problem, and unless we fix this, not only will the deficit remain as high as it is—because, dare I say it, it’s going to go higher—not only will the deficit stay where it is, it’s going to get worse. With that, unless we deal with the revenue side, all of the service infrastructure that we have so long loved in this province is just going to dwindle—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: See you later, Attorney General. Good to see you.

The service infrastructure is just going to disappear ever so slowly.

The member from Gore—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Bramalea–Gore–Milton.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Malton.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is so far, I’m telling you. My son lives in them parts. Man, is it far, I’ve got to tell you.

We’ve got a revenue problem. The problems we have are so severe that in the next 10 years it’s going to get worse. So let’s look at the broader picture. It’s been talked about by many, but you need to be reminded, because the problems are bad.

Poverty is not going down. Under the Tories, when we had eight years of a good economy, we didn’t deal with the poverty issues. Under the Liberals, when we had many, many good years of a good economy, we didn’t do a good job.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Where’s the pecunia?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The pecunia that you had, which you did not spend wisely. For eight long years under the Tories and then under these fine Liberals, poverty goes up; the deficit goes up; unemployment goes up. Good-paying jobs disappear. Food banks were increasing under the Tories, and it continues with the Liberals. Precarious employment continues, with people

working at one or two part-time jobs. College teachers—half of them part-time, and 25% of university professors working on contract. Do you not get a sense that we've got a little problem in the province? I do, and we're not dealing with that. So, when you say that things are great, they're not. You all know that things are not great.

Did we have anything in the throne speech, member from Willowdale, that deals with any of these problems?

Mr. David Zimmer: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yeah? Tell me one.

Mr. David Zimmer: Substantial policy.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Substantial policy nothing. He's talking in a vacuum. There's absolutely nothing there—absolutely nothing.

All of the issues that I talk about, from food banks to poverty issues to wages—which, by the way, have gone down since the 1980s. Since the 1980s, wages have been flatlined. Do you realize this? I hope I'm not saying anything that you don't know. Wages have been going like this: The top 10% of the population's wages are going up and the majority of people's wages are just flatlining and going down. Surely you would know that, right?

We are going back into the 1950s. We're going back into an era where my father, coming here in 1956, struggled like all the other immigrants. We are going to back to that era, and it's getting worse. The poor immigrants who have followed us, who thought they would have what we had in the 1950s—mind you, not the 1950s because the 1950s were bad, but the 1960s were amazing for all the immigrants because that's when the economy went like this and wages went like that. Good jobs were abundant, and manufacturing jobs were there that provided for a healthy, strong middle class. We don't have it any more. It's all gone and getting worse.

So there's nothing to be proud of. Is there anything in this budget that helps? Oh, lest I forget, it's the renovation dollars that the Liberals are spending. Yeah, that should do it. That should lift us up a lot. It will create a good—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Due to the fact that we have met the magic hour, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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