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Monday 5 December 2011

Lundi 5 décembre 2011

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 December 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 décembre 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: In the gallery, I have Rej Picard, Jan VanderHout, Don Taylor, Tamara Stokes, William Ravensbergen and Gerard Schouwenaar; and I hope all the members will attend the reception in room 228 following question period and enjoy great produce from Ontario's greenhouses.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce the family today of page Tara Collins. I have Geoffrey, her father; Anjani, her mother; and Asha Collins, who was a page here in 2008. A warm welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add my welcome and would implore all members of this assembly to welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance as well. They are here bearing gifts, which is a traditional thing that they do every year, and I've been asked to remind all members of the House to pick up their coupons for their poinsettias and greenhouse vegetables at the whip's office and to join us in rooms 228 and 230.

One of the guests, Mr. Speaker, Jan VanderHout, who is the father of page Daniel Vander Hout, is here today, and Nellie Vander Hout and Grace Vander Muellen and other family members are in the gallery. Welcome, all.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to introduce today my special niece, Aleksandra Windsor, from the great riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and also my wife, Kate Bartz. Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the 145,000 students they represent. They are here for their student advocacy conference until December 7. I hope members will take time to meet with them. I also thank them for the great work they've been doing to make our education system more affordable and more accessible.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce the family of page Sam Knechtel, and friends: Jo Anne Knechtel, Clare Knechtel, Michaela Knechtel, Julia Campbell and Mag Feeney. Welcome.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to welcome the executive of the Canadian Association of South Asian Lawyers, in short, CASAL. Present in the east members'

gallery are Joga Chahal, the president; Parm Prashad and Raj Sharda, senior vice-presidents; Dhaman Kissoon, Muhammad Alam and Dr. J.S. Mangat, directors; and Shameela Chinoy and Kiran Grewal, members. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the members' gallery east, rejoining us today is a page from 2009, Vanessa Van Decker, and her mother, Maureen Madigan. Thanks for joining us.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to introduce, in the members' gallery today, from my riding, Connie Graham and her daughters Jackie and Angie, and their special guest, Amanda Nogueira. Amanda is a high school exchange student from Brazil who is part of the Rotary exchange program through the Kitchener Rotary Club. I want to welcome them on behalf of all of us here today.

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

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, for nearly a year you have told Ontarians we are recovering from the global recession, made excuses for ballooning spending and defended increasing the size of your government. But you aren't fooling anyone. We have been telling you for the past eight years that real change is needed to get Ontario back on a strong economic footing. Our party has made a series of recommendations that would help you put your house in order and stimulate the economy. You invited that, encouraged it.

We have three days left before winter break. Premier, when will you finally put your money where your mouth is and take some constructive action to get Ontario out of the mess you've gotten our province into?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm pleased to take the question from my honourable colleague. We are all ears when it comes to good proposals that will serve to strengthen our economy, create jobs and do so in a way that does not compromise our highest priorities on behalf of families, which are their schools and health care.

Having said that, there are a number of—in fact, there are two specific, practical initiatives before the Legislature. One is our healthy homes renovation tax credit. We know that will create some 10,000 jobs on an annual

basis. It will create \$800 million in economic wealth every single year. That's a practical matter before this Legislature and I would ask, and in fact I would encourage, my honourable colleague and his colleagues to support this very specific, practical measure in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, since the election in October you have claimed to be open to input from this side of the House. The reality is that you and your caucus shoot down everything that is not Liberal. In debate last week, the member from Oakville told me your party had won, period.

Since you are not willing to listen to the PC caucus, listen to those who, unlike your government, are creating jobs in Ontario. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce represents 60,000 businesses and has made four recommendations to reduce government spending, including restraining public sector salaries. Speaker, since the Premier and his government refuse to listen the PC caucus, will they listen to Ontario's business community and finally put an end to their preferential treatment of government employee unions at the taxpayers' expense?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're very open to any suggestions for the budget that we will present in this House next year.

But on the matter of wage restraint, I think it's important to understand what the facts are. We froze pay for two years for the non-union sector, and since our last budget, let's take a look at what's happened to wage settlements elsewhere. Our wage settlements have averaged 1.5%; the private sector in Ontario, 1.9%; the federal public sector, my colleague's cousins in Ottawa, 1.7%. So, in fact, the method that we have adopted is securing the lowest wage increases, the lowest settlements in Ontario. That's why I would encourage my honourable colleague to take that into account.

Of course, we're very much interested in what he has to say, as well as the chamber of commerce.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ontario's business community urging the government to rein in spending on government salaries should come as no surprise. Our party has repeatedly recommended that to this Premier and to this finance minister, and clearly this government has no intention of listening to the opposition or to Ontario's business community and has no intention of cutting spending and stopping the increase in public sector salaries.

If they are unwilling to listen to us or to organizations like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, one can only wonder whom this government is listening to. Maybe it's the unions whose members earn 27% more than Ontarians doing the same work as in the private sector.

Would the Premier be listening to us if he were paying us a consulting fee?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On a serious note, Speaker, I think it's important for us to take just a moment—I know

these are challenging times; the global economy is characterized by tremendous uncertainty. But just at the end of last week we learned that in the month of November full-time employment in Ontario increased by 31,800 jobs; the unemployment rate has dropped 0.2 percentage points, to 7.9%; we are now up 283,400 net jobs above the recessionary low in May 2009; we're recovering more than half of the new jobs in the country. I think that's some indication that we are in fact on the right track here in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. For several weeks now, the Ontario PC Party has been calling on your government to implement a public sector wage freeze. A freeze, if implemented, would save \$2 billion over two years.

Premier, Ontarians know that in difficult economic times such as we're facing, some sacrifices need to be made, and if jobs can be preserved, then increases can temporarily be foregone. Yet, you continue to insist that a public sector wage freeze cannot be implemented, legally or constitutionally, despite the fact that freezes have been implemented in other provinces. Upon what basis do you make this argument, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, again, as the Premier pointed out in the last question, since the implementation of our policy, average settlements in Ontario have been 1.5% versus 1.7% in the federal government and 1.9% in the private sector. So in fact it is having some effect.

We will continue to make the kinds of investments we have made, the kinds of investments that created thousands of new jobs last month and that have brought employment back to levels not seen since before the downturn, and will continue to make the kinds of investments and decisions that will help shape a better future for Ontarians.

That's what it's about, Mr. Speaker, and we're committed to making it work for all Ontarians, through investments in education and health care, as we get back to balance over the coming years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The question is really about the legality of the public sector wage freeze. To get back to that, in a 2004 Supreme Court ruling, the court held that infringements of section 2(d) of the Charter can be permitted by section 1 on the basis of pressing and substantial fiscal circumstances. The ruling states that "the courts cannot close their eyes to the periodic occurrence of financial emergencies when measures must be taken to juggle priorities to see a government through a crisis."

Premier, I'm sure you're familiar with this case, so why do you continue to insist that this government cannot constitutionally legislate a public sector wage freeze?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, through you to the opposition, I'd like to remind them that there's no

legislated public sector wage freeze in British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick or Quebec.

All provinces in Canada are bound by the same constitutional protections for collective bargaining. Government interventions through legislated wage freezes are subject to judicial scrutiny.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me add some more facts. The member opposite can yell and grunt and do whatever he's doing, but let's just look at the facts.

Ontario's public sector average annual wage increase is less than or equal to Prince Edward Island at 2%, New Brunswick at 1.5%, Quebec at 1.6%, Manitoba at 1.5%, Newfoundland at 5%, Saskatchewan at 2.6%, Alberta at 2.8%.

We are working diligently to get back to balance as we continue to make the kinds of investments that are needed for—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There are important facts that the Minister of Finance has failed to mention, such as the fact that for 59 straight months, this province's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average.

Ontario's third-largest expenditure, behind health and education, isn't colleges and universities or roads and infrastructure, but it's spending \$10 billion a year on debt payments. That's \$10 billion in taxpayer dollars being thrown away instead of going into essential services.

Premier, if the Supreme Court recognizes that \$2 billion can be saved to see us through this crisis, the people of Ontario deserve to know why you're choosing not to implement a public sector wage freeze.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the member opposite that last month Ontario's unemployment rate went down and Canada's went up.

They use a lot of numbers out of context. Last month, they told us about 100 jobs an hour are being lost, which really demonstrates why their credibility is so shaky.

Let's look at it this way: In November, Ontario gained 45 new full-time jobs per hour. Since January of this year, we gained 16 jobs per hour, and since the recessionary low, 13 jobs an hour. I hesitate to use those numbers because I don't want to be playing with statistics the way they do, as opposed to looking at facts over time.

Steady, responsible leadership involves using facts. It involves making sure you understand the full story and that you work hard for a better future—

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

SALARY DISCLOSURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, today, news reports show that the Minister of Health couldn't explain why executives at the publicly funded Ornge are not disclosing their salaries to the people who pay them.

Does the Premier know how much the executives at Ornge are paying themselves, and if so, will he tell the people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to Ornge, Ornge has a complicated corporate structure. They have a not-for-profit arm that delivers air transportation for the people of Ontario and, I must say, they do a remarkable job getting people to the care that they need.

They also have a for-profit arm. The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act specifically excludes the private sector from reporting their salaries, so that is why these salaries are not seen on our sunshine list.

Having said that, Speaker, I have asked for further clarity. I need to better understand why it is that all salaries at Ornge are not covered in the act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Interestingly enough, Speaker, last year my staff asked why salaries at Ornge were being hidden from the public, and the Ministry of Health said that they knew what the salaries were but they weren't going to tell us.

I want to know if the minister is prepared to tell us what the executives at Ornge are paying themselves, and, if not, why not? It's taxpayers' money that is paying for this organization. Regardless of how good the work is that they do, they still should have their salaries disclosed so that we know what they're being paid.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me try again. The not-for-profit company of Ornge that provides air ambulance service and some land ambulance service to the people of Ontario is covered under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, and those salaries are, in fact, disclosed. There is another organization called Ornge Peel that is a for-profit organization. They are not required, under the act, to report. However, I am looking for more clarity on the corporate structure of Ornge so that I am satisfied that they are adhering to both the letter and the spirit of the law.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, across Ontario, families are being told that money isn't available for front-line care. ERs are being closed and wait-lists for long-term care are growing and growing. Not long ago, you may recall, we learned that hospitals were hiding salary top-ups for senior executives at the Ministry of Health in their budgets. Now we're learning today that an organization doesn't have to report at all that's funded by the Ministry of Health.

Does the minister know how much the executives are being paid at Ornge? If so, will she tell us how much they're being paid? And if not, when is she going to tell us?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General of Ontario has been taking a look at Ornge. He will be releasing an audit in the not-too-distant future.

We are determined to continue to get better value for money. When those auditor's recommendations do come forward, we will be looking at them very, very closely. Transparency and value for money are hallmarks of this government.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Cliffs Natural Resources say that they plan to ship chromite from the Ring of Fire outside of Ontario, outside of Canada, to be processed. Under the Mining Act, they need permission from this government to do so. Does the Premier plan to allow the minister to simply sign off on shipping that chromite out of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I know that my colleague would like to speak to this, but I'm going to weigh in first and restate something I said before.

My colleague and I opposite have had an opportunity to debate this, I think, on a number of occasions, and we see things differently. Our shared responsibility is to do everything that we can to maximize the benefits of the development of the Ring of Fire for the people of Ontario. But I will not go so far as to erect protectionist walls around the province of Ontario, because there are so many jobs today in Ontario that count on our receiving raw goods from other parts of the world so that we can process those here and then feed our families here as a result of those jobs. So I'm not prepared to go that far, but I am certainly prepared to do everything that we possibly can apart from that to maximize those benefits for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people in Ontario and especially people in the north are looking for good jobs that use our natural resources to grow our economy. For days, Cliffs has been making it known that their plan to send our resources away to create jobs somewhere else is in the works.

The minister has the power to do something about it. I want to know: Has this minister actually spoken with Cliffs? Has he given them a signal as to what his plans are?

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, this is an opportunity that this government and the people of Ontario are not going to miss. The Ring of Fire provides the people of Ontario with incredible opportunity in the supply and services industry with regard to mining and job creation, not only in northern Ontario but across Ontario. This is an opportunity that this government isn't going to squander. We're going to ensure that we maximize the job potential that is associated with the Ring of Fire, not only in the extraction but with the rest of the parameters around mining.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, those of us in the NDP caucus are worried that this is going to be an incredibly lost opportunity.

The minister's job is to bring jobs and value-added investment here to Ontario. He spent a lot of time talking during the campaign, but now he needs to do something. Will the minister grant the exemption or fight for good jobs in Thunder Bay and Sudbury? Or is he going to simply keep talking and talking and talking while good jobs get shipped away?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We, unlike the NDP, aren't going to speak in hyperbole. There has been no application for exemption at all. We are at the beginning stages of the Ring of Fire. We're only at the initial stages of the environmental approval. But what we can say categorically is that we are going to ensure that we maximize the potential of the Ring of Fire for all Ontarians.

We see this as an enormous opportunity to create those long-term mining jobs that each and every one of us in this House should want to create for Ontario. We, as a government, are not going to miss that opportunity.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Finance. I want to bring to your attention a completely unreasonable treatment of Roselawn Memorial Gardens, an outstanding business in my riding, at the hands of the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. Despite the mountain of evidence proving they face a tax burden unlike any other visitation centre or crematorium in the province, the property tax bureaucrats won't budge.

Instead of waiting until July of next year, when new regulations come into effect, MPAC is running around the province picking and choosing at a whim which cemeteries are taxed and which remain exempt. Minister, will you commit today to get involved and tell MPAC to come to its senses and put an end to this unfair treatment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the member, I was not aware of that specific circumstance. I will undertake to look into it further.

I would remind the members opposite that the board of directors of MPAC is in fact controlled by our municipal partners, but I will undertake to follow up and look into that situation further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, you need to understand that Roselawn is one of only two cemetery chapels in Ontario not exempt from taxation. And it gets worse. MPAC has reclassified Roselawn's crematorium as industrial. The basis for this ridiculous decision is that MPAC states the industrial class applies where "a product is changed materially from one thing to another."

With respect, cremation does not change a human body from one thing to another. Minister, do you not agree that what remains following cremation is as much a human dead body as it was before?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I'll undertake to follow up with the member on that. I first want to see that the

company has made efforts to exercise whatever appeals it has available to it. I'm not aware of that.

What I would like to ask the member, though, is if he will in fact vote in favour of the replenishing of the eastern Ontario development fund, which will create jobs in eastern Ontario. It's interesting that the party opposite has not taken a stand in favour of it, particularly given the fact that many previous Conservative members—I remember that Mr. Sterling, for instance, was a very strong advocate of that; Senator Runciman was a strong advocate of that.

So I will follow up on the member's question. I was not aware of the situation. But I ask you: Support eastern Ontario, support growth and jobs, and support the bill that your predecessor—

Interjections.

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

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Today the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction released its annual report on the government's poverty reduction strategy. They indicate that poverty rates have actually risen among adults, that over 100,000 more adults living in Ontario fell into poverty during the first year of the strategy.

So my question to the Premier: Will he assure the House that the government will not make life any harder for the swelling number of low-income Ontarians by cutting programs and cutting supports in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the third party. I want to begin by saying that we thank 25 in 5 for their report and, in fact, for recognizing Ontario as the only province to have taken concrete action to reduce child poverty

1100

Mr. Speaker, 25 in 5 has been a key partner in the development of our poverty reduction strategy, a strategy we remain committed to, including its goal of reducing poverty by 25% in five years. I thank them for their continued advocacy on behalf of those Ontarians living in poverty.

We can be proud, all of us, that Ontario has a long-term strategy enshrined in legislation which received all-party support. We thank 25 in 5 for recognizing that our programs, such as the Ontario child benefit, investments in child care and full-day kindergarten, and raising the minimum wage, have had—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The concrete action that has resulted from this government's program is 100,000 more adults now living in poverty. Also, a 25 in 5 report shows that food bank use is up 25%, that social assistance rates for single adults have fallen since 2003 and that invest-

ment in affordable housing has fallen 91% from last year; 25 in 5 actually fears that the government will slash spending on housing, social services and income supports in the 2012 budget.

So I ask, Mr. Speaker, of the minister, will he actually promise that struggling Ontarians will not bear the brunt of a fiscal situation that they did not help create? Or will the government continue to give profitable corporations billion-dollar tax cuts?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, this government remains committed to our poverty reduction strategy. I agree that there is obviously much work to be done still, but I want to point out some of the progress that has been made. We raised the minimum wage to \$10.25, a nearly 50% increase since 2003. It has been increased seven times in the last eight years. I'll give you an example: A single parent with a young child working full-time at minimum wage earns \$875 more per month now compared to 2003, and that is a 58% increase.

Now, 25 in 5, their report just published, also reports that the provincial Ontario child benefit has helped pull 19,000 children out of poverty during the recession. We remain committed to this important strategy.

WAGE PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Labour. This past July, IQT Solutions Ltd. closed suddenly in Canada. This closure resulted in the loss of 400 jobs in Oshawa in Durham region, as well as the loss of nearly 500 jobs in Quebec. These workers were left without owed wages, vacation pay, termination pay and severance pay.

I understand that one avenue of action for these workers is the federal Wage Earner Protection Program, but the company has not filed for formal bankruptcy, which is preventing many of its former employees from accessing this program's benefits.

Minister, what has your ministry done to help these employees who find themselves without jobs?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for the question. I'm pleased to announce that the Ministry of Labour is supporting the Quebec government in its petition to have IQT Solutions declared bankrupt. In order for the former employees of the call centre in Oshawa to be entitled to benefits, IQT Solutions must be first declared bankrupt. By joining forces with Quebec, we are helping former IQT Solutions employees access the federal government's Wage Earner Protection Program. This program will help former employees recover unpaid wages, vacation pay, termination pay and severance pay. I understand that the petition will be heard in late December 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad to hear that our Ministry of Labour is working together with the Quebec government to help these employees recover what they are owed.

I understand that employees have also contacted the Ministry of Labour for help under provincial laws. What is the Ministry of Labour doing within its own jurisdiction to assist these employees?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Again, I thank the member for the question. The Ministry of Labour's staff have been on the ground in Oshawa since early summer when we first learned of the layoffs. In fact, in the days following IQT's closure, an employment standards officer attended the workplace to investigate the circumstances surrounding the closure.

My ministry also participated in an information session to ensure former employees were aware of their employment standard rights. Employment standards claims have been filed by some former employees. We've also issued orders to pay against IQT regarding 240 claims.

We will continue to advocate to our federal partners for improved eligibility criteria as well as an increase to benefits from the wage earner protection program. My ministry also continues to encourage the federal government to recognize the vital contribution of the Ontario workers.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. Two months ago the people of rural Ontario sent a message that this government wasn't working for them, and it's clear nothing has changed.

We are joined here today by the Ontario Agri Business Association. For eight years, they've been asking your government to classify grain elevators correctly as commercial instead of industrial. Since the grain isn't being manufactured, produced or processed, this change would have a big positive impact on the local businesses and on job creation.

In the Blenheim area, which has been hit hard by job losses, the industrial rate is 22% higher than commercial, and those costs have to be passed on. This is one of the steps the government could take to create jobs in rural Ontario.

Will you provide a written commitment that you will fix the classification of grain elevators to create jobs in rural Ontario, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the ongoing issue with respect to the classification of these. These are made by the board of MPAC which, I remind the member opposite, is controlled by Ontario's municipalities.

We work with our rural communities. I was very proud of this government's risk management program, which is being implemented as we speak. Unfortunately, the federal government is not participating in that yet either.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of issues on the rural front that we have resolved in the past. For instance, on microFIT energy projects we had to change the Assessment Act in order that the property values

wouldn't go up associated with the installation of renewable energy technologies.

I look forward to continuing the work with MPAC on this particular issue. It's important for the development of rural Ontario, which is such an important part of the Ontario economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: It's clear this government doesn't understand rural Ontario's concerns. We are joined today by the Rural Greenhouse Alliance. These businesses are ready to invest in their communities. They are ready to create thousands of desperately needed jobs for rural Ontario's families.

The Premier is allowing his Toronto bureaucrats at the OPA to cancel vital projects like the Leamington transmission line, causing costly delays. Premier, why is a transitional agency like the OPA allowed to threaten jobs for rural Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're very, very interested and supportive of job-creating opportunities in south-western Ontario and throughout the province.

Right now, I know that the Ontario Power Authority and Hydro One are working very closely—very closely—to determine the options to support good business interests. The Minister of Finance has been very, very interested in supporting the greenhouse growers and good job opportunities in the province of Ontario.

The member will appreciate that we need to make sure that not only the ratepayers, but taxpayers are protected throughout—so we want to make sure it's all based on good evidence. That work is under way at the moment. We're very determined that Essex, Windsor, southwestern Ontario and all of Ontario is supportive of our efforts to create jobs—very supportive of that. And as I say, the Minister of Finance has been very interested from a local perspective as well. Good work going on.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: Two years ago, Toronto's medical officer of health urged the McGuinty government to only proceed with the Union-Pearson air-rail link if it's electrified in order to prevent an increased risk of asthma and cancer for 300,000 residents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who's the minister, please?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's to the Minister of Transportation; my apologies.

Some 300,000 people are at risk of asthma and cancer near that line. Why does the McGuinty government continue to ignore this expert advice and put people's health at risk by insisting on using polluting diesel trains on this line?

1110

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to thank the member for Davenport for the question. The member will know that this government is investing heavily in transit in the

GTHA, including very, very significant projects, such as the Eglinton line and the air-rail link line etc.

The question of electrification is taken very seriously by this government. There are studies that are ongoing with respect to that, but the most important thing is, we're actually doing the air-rail link from Union Station to Pearson airport, which is one of the largest projects in North America in terms of moving tens of millions of people.

We're committed to doing the air-rail link. We're committed, through studies, to look at electrification. That's an ongoing study that we're pursuing at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Minister of Transportation: The government is rushing ahead with diesel trains in time for the 2015 Pan Am Games, but there's no guarantee that trains will be in place for 2015. Athletes and officials won't even use these trains, sir. They will be bused in on dedicated highway lanes, just as spectators could be. Why won't the McGuinty government stop sacrificing people's health and direct Metrolinx to build it right the first time? Go with electric trains now.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know why that party doesn't appreciate the significance of the air-rail link, the Pan Am Games that we're moving forward with, very significant infrastructure projects and economic development projects.

On January 26, 2011, Metrolinx approved the recommendation of the comprehensive electrification study to begin electrification of the Lakeshore and Georgetown GO Transit rail corridors with the new ARL as the first phase. Following this approval, the province directed Metrolinx to start the environmental assessment. The work is proceeding. We can't recreate the world overnight. It's a priority of ours. We're working on it, but we're going to have the air-rail link ready for the Pan Am Games, and we're going to seriously look at electrification.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We've come a long way since 2003 by working together with industry experts to fix the skilled trades and apprenticeships that were left in shambles by successive governments.

The principal recommendation made by Mr. Tim Armstrong to fix the trades industry was to create an institution that would allow tradespeople to have the last word in deciding how they're to be governed. That's why we worked with Ontarians to establish the College of Trades, an industry-driven organization that has equal representation of both employers and employees through the college's board, union and non-union.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has mentioned to me that the work is already under way to ensure that the college will have a balanced approach to governance that considers the needs of employers, employees, apprentices, the

economy and the public. Through you to the minister: How is the minister going to ensure that the College of Trades stays transparent and impartial?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Peterborough for the question.

Half of the board of governors are representatives of business. As a matter of fact, this group is so non-partisan and so unbiased that it actually elected a management representative, a former member of this Legislature, a former member of the Conservative caucus opposite, as its chairperson. Mr. Ron Johnson represents the interior design employers' association and represents over 50% of that.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the 34 trades of the 150, of which ratios are being set for, are being set by joint management-labour committees, including representatives of employees in the non-labour sector. It is one of the most impartial and fair-minded processes under way right now in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Through you to the minister, Mr. Speaker: It's clear the opposition has little interest in working with us while we're fixing the skilled trades and apprenticeships system through the College of Trades. I'm proud that our government is committed to working in the best interest of all Ontarians and Peterboroughians.

Since we've been in government, we have doubled the number of apprenticeships to 120,000. Last year, we created more than 29,000 new apprenticeship positions. While the PC Party was in government, they created less than 15,000 apprenticeships a year and cut funding to the apprenticeship and training programs by 73.4% in the first three years. Our record at skilled trades and apprenticeships clearly shows our commitment to move Ontario and Peterborough forward.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Can you tell us how it is possible that the Leader of the Opposition has promised he will create 200,000 apprenticeships in just four years?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, that is ironic in some ways, because when they were in power they cut apprenticeships by 74%, a cut to budget. Then their program as they composed it couldn't generate 15,000 apprenticeships per year and they only achieved a maximum number of 60,000 apprenticeships in their entire period in government, which is rather extraordinary.

We already are at 120,000, and we've added 29,000. We believe in the College of Trades, working with industry and workers and colleges. But to meet the 200,000, you would need 50,000 more employers. Right now we have 37,000. There is no budget at all in any of their numbers for college or private sector apprenticeships.

This is the most bizarre proposal to come out: no costing, no explanation of where the 50,000 employers come from, no infrastructure, no budget, no money. In other words—

Interjections.

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Would the minister advise the House whether he believes it is ever appropriate for a medically fragile 21-year-old with developmental and physical disabilities to be placed in a nursing home?

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the member is referring to a specific case. I'm assuming that by the tone of his question and the way that it was put forward, and I would be very happy to look into a case that he brings forward.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a developmental services network of organizations and ministry support throughout the province. They work with individuals and their families to make sure that the person is placed in the most appropriate care setting. As I say, if the member wants to bring forward a particular case, I'd be happy to look into it, but again, the bottom line is finding the most appropriate setting for that individual to receive the care they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I have brought this case to the attention of the minister's office and the ministry on many occasions, but let me refresh his memory. Leslie and Gary Dillon are from Nottawa. Their daughter Jessi is 21 years old and severely disabled. For the past eight weeks, Jessi has been at the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital waiting for support services such as Passport funding or admission to e3 Community Services in Collingwood. Their doctor will not release Jessi from the hospital until support services are available, and unfortunately, none are. Mr. and Mrs. Dillon are concerned that their daughter is going to be forced into a nursing home, something most caring parents would not want for their child.

Minister, you're spending a lot of money to keep Jessi in hospital. Is there not a more dignified way to look after the Dillon family's needs?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this particular case to our attention. Obviously, all of our sympathy and our hearts go out to the family that are finding themselves in this very difficult situation, as well as the child that they're seeking the most appropriate care for.

As I said, I'd be happy to look into the specific case. As members know, as a minister I can't talk about specific cases here on the floor of the Legislature, but what I can do is talk about the commitment of the ministry to work with families and individuals to make sure they receive the type of care that's most appropriate for their circumstances.

I would point out to the honourable member that under our watch, our government has significantly increased the amount of funding that is available for developmental services across this province. We're going to continue to work with providers and with families to make sure that we provide the most appropriate care, and again, I look

forward to looking into this case for the honourable member.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. A number of recommendations that followed the contaminated water tragedy at Walkerton focused on strengthening public health at Walkerton and across the province. Does the Premier think that eliminating services in the community's public health office, with plans to close that local unit entirely, is a good idea?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm pleased to look in greater detail into the issue that the leader of the third party has raised. What I can tell you is that we are absolutely committed to having the cleanest drinking water possible. We learned a lesson from Walkerton, and our government has made a very high priority bringing clean water to the people of this province. So I am more than happy to look into the issue that the leader of the third party has raised.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a bigger-picture issue, of course. The closure of this public health unit, leaving just one public health office open for an entire region that's larger than the province of Prince Edward Island, is something we see as concerning.

The decision seems to have been made without any transparency, without any information going to the public or any engagement with the public. In fact, the local board of health was not engaged, nor was the mayor even aware that this was in the works.

My question, again, is to the minister: Why is the Walkerton public health office closing, and does she support that move?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said in the initial question, I will look into this particular issue. I think it's important to recognize that public health units are administered by the municipalities; however, I will look into this issue.

We have made a big commitment to public health. In fact, evidence of that is demonstrated by the fact that we have increased funding to our public health units from 50% to 75%. We believe in public health. We believe in making investments to keep people healthy so they don't need to come into our acute health care system.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. This past Saturday marked the International Day of Disabled Persons. The day gives us an opportunity to reflect upon the daily challenges faced by people with disabilities in our communities and upon what we do as a government to support these individuals and their families. The day gives all of us an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to

building an accessible and inclusive Ontario for people with all different kinds of disabilities.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: How is this government addressing the needs of Ontarians with disabilities and their families to make our province fully inclusive?

Hon. John Milloy: I very much appreciate the honourable member's question, particularly on the fact that Saturday was the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I was pleased, as I'm sure many members of this Legislature were, to attend several events in my riding to mark this day; a day, in fact, when we can celebrate the outstanding contribution made by individuals with disabilities and also talk about some of the progress that we've made as a society.

As a government, I think all members of this Legislature should be very proud of the passage in 2005 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The AODA, as it's known, will help create inclusion for everyone in Ontario, regardless of their ability, so that they can all make a full contribution. It provides for enforceable standards with timelines for compliance in a number of different areas, including accessing goods, services, information, transportation, buildings and employment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister. We all benefit from the work that is done to make our communities more accessible.

I understand that as of January 1, 2012, a customer-service standard regarding accessibility comes into effect for all Ontario businesses. Some of my constituents in York South–Weston, however, have expressed some concerns that complying with the standards will cost business a lot, and I've also heard that there is some confusion on the requirements.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain what can be done to ensure that businesses implement these standards and what assurances can be made about the costs of these standards to the businesses?

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's a very important question, and my ministry has been working very hard to inform businesses of their new responsibilities over the standards which, as the member pointed out, will be coming into effect on January 1.

Mr. Speaker, it's about changing culture; it's a way of doing things that's taking into account the needs of individuals with disabilities as you conduct business, as you serve customers. Many of the standards have no costs associated with them. Some specific standards could be: How are you accommodating a customer service dog? Do your employees have proper training so that they can use plain language when helping someone with a developmental disability? Writing down the answer to a question for someone who is deaf or hearing impaired.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, it's about changing the culture. It's about making sure that employers and their employees have the proper training so that they can serve

people with developmental disabilities. It's good for the individual who's coming in, but it's also good for business, something, I think, that—

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

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Premier. In 2007, the McGuinty government launched the GTA West Corridor study, saying that they wanted to have a comprehensive study of transportation options through our area.

One of the options they've identified through this process, alternative 4-3, has been rejected by the councils of the town of Halton Hills and the region of Halton, and by thousands of residents.

Just before the election, I called for the GTA West Corridor study to be put on hold pending a review of the whole thing by the next Minister of Transportation. Days later, they announced the delay.

Now we have a new minister. My question to the Premier is this: Will he tell the minister to listen to the people of Halton Hills and take alternative 4-3 off the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Wellington–Halton Hills for his question. I acknowledge receiving the letter that he sent to me. We've also had a brief discussion with it. I've also undertaken to provide an MTO briefing for the member, and I understand I'm meeting with the mayor of Halton Hills tomorrow.

We're taking your issue very, very seriously, but of course the member knows that we're trying to meet the demands of our growing population and economy in the GTHA. We're looking at ways to build transportation links between large employment and population centres in the greater Golden Horseshoe and to US markets. There is a study under way, as you're aware. We've also commenced some additional studies. We will take the community's interests very seriously moving forward.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's interest, but I have to say that his answer will not satisfy my constituents.

A new highway built along alternative 4-3 would cut our community in half, destroy farmland and heritage sites, and have a negative impact on our local environment. The town has identified a reasonable and practical alternative: the widening of the 401, which would have to be a more cost-effective solution in the current constrained fiscal environment that we're in.

Now is not the time for more dithering on this issue. We need a clear and unequivocal answer. Will the Premier assure my constituents that he will put an end to alternative 4-3 once and for all?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've received a lot of input and comments on the draft strategy and we've heard the concerns from local residents about a new east-west corridor through Halton Hills. In response to the concerns, we will conduct additional analysis and consultation on the highway recommendations in the Halton area. The additional work will examine in greater detail the impacts on farms, rural communities, businesses and natural features. We will bring forward the results for full public review and discussion before any decision on next steps. We take the concerns very seriously. We're looking at them. We will work with the community to try to find alternatives. But we have to wait for the full analysis to take place and I'll continue to work with the member as we move forward with this issue.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Rainy River's health centre serves not only the local town, but also three rural townships and two First Nations communities. This is 2,700 people. It has a 24-hour emergency room, three acute care beds and provides primary care, but since October it has been operating with only one physician. Now the emergency room is expected to close by December 24 because of this doctor shortage.

Speaker, the community has been raising these concerns with the minister for months. Does the minister have a plan to prevent Rainy River's ER from closing?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for raising this issue that I know is of extreme importance in Rainy River and the surrounding area.

Speaker, we are aware that there has been a resignation of a physician from the emergency department in Rainy River. That is creating problems to keep the emergency department open over the Christmas holidays. I'm very pleased to report that interim coverage has been found from December 23 until January 2. We still, though, do have a few days, the 3rd and the 5th. We are working very hard to ensure coverage to the people of Rainy River.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Speaker, if the Rainy River ER closes, residents will be facing a one- to two-hour drive to the nearest ER, in Fort Frances. These ERs are already overburdened and understaffed. Officials in Rainy River expect that a permanent closure of the ER would add an additional \$800,000 to ambulance costs.

The community has already been working together to find a solution, but the closure date is looming. Will the minister guarantee that health care services are not lost?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member has outlined the reason why we're working so hard to keep this emergency department open: We know how important it is to the community.

HealthForceOntario works with hospitals across the province who are having difficulty filling those vitally

important emergency department shifts. We will continue to work to complete this job, to find coverage for those two or three days where we're still looking for someone.

The LHIN, the hospital and the ministry are working together, with the common purpose of keeping this most important emergency department open.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, my riding of Richmond Hill is home to many newcomers. When immigrants arrive in our province, many of them rely on settlement services in their community to help them get settled and find a job. Catholic Community Services of York Region is one of the agencies serving Richmond Hill.

Settlement services are especially important in these uncertain economic times, when we need everyone at their best. That's why newcomers in my riding have been raising their concerns about the recent unilateral funding cuts to Ontario's newcomer settlement agencies announced by the federal government. Minister, what effect will these cuts have on Ontario's economic recovery?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. I agree: Successful integration of immigrants into Ontario's workplace is an economic imperative. That's why we're concerned with yet another round of cuts by the federal government.

Many newcomers rely on settlement agencies to help put their skills to work. I've been meeting with service providers who have shared with me their deep concern about how this year's cuts will affect their clients. I am pleased to introduce Mississauga South community leaders and volunteers Ms. Karen Duffy, founder and CEO of Wellness Direct, and Mr. Winston Meyer, founder and president of Community Door, who are with us today. Thank you for joining us at Queen's Park.

Many agencies similar to theirs are worried that cuts will lead to decreased access to services for newcomers, or, even worse, agencies closing down. It's especially important for us to keep working hard to ensure that all citizens and newcomers have the opportunity to fully participate in our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have heard similar concerns in my riding. Last year, when the federal Conservatives cut Ontario's funding by \$44 million, settlement services were definitely affected. Now it seems that the federal government is determined to make the same mistake twice.

Ontario is the only province receiving a cut this year. We are also the only province without an immigration agreement with the federal government. My question to the minister: What is being done to engage the federal government to reach a new agreement?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member makes a very important point: Ontario is the only province without an agreement on immigration with the federal government.

We're also the only province to be targeted for funding cuts this year. And all the while, Ontario welcomes more immigrants this year than the rest of Canada combined, excluding Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, I had the pleasure of meeting with federal Minister of Immigration and Citizenship Mr. Jason Kenney. It was a good meeting. Among the issues discussed, I impressed upon him the need for his government to come back to the table and negotiate a new agreement with Ontario. I've also asked the federal government to reverse these unilateral cuts.

I urge the federal government to put politics aside and sit down with Ontario to negotiate a new agreement that puts the needs of newcomers front and centre, and I call on all members of this House to stand together in the best interests of Ontario and Ontario's newcomers.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, we have a power problem in Ontario in that we're selling our surplus power to Quebec and the United States for much less than it costs to produce, actually to the tune of \$420 million. At the same time we have a surplus of energy, we're forcing intermittent wind and solar power onto the grid at subsidy-inflated prices. This is driving up energy costs for Ontario families and businesses, who are already hurting.

Minister, will you please tell Ontario families why you're driving up the cost of their energy bills to produce renewable energy we simply don't need?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, when we started in 2003, the energy system was a mess. There wasn't enough generation, transmission was old and it was based on dirty coal. We made a decision: We're going to get out of coal, clean up the air, improve the health of Ontarians and make sure we have reliable power. That's been a long-term—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We had gotten so close. Let's just stay like this for the last minute, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: That's a long-term effort that requires decisions made three, five, 10 years in order to get the power you need on a specific day. We're making great progress in cleaning up the air. We are rebuilding our transmission and generation systems, and we are actually making money every year so far on the in-and-out exports because they do contribute to the bottom line of the ratepayers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: First the government piles up the costs from the cancelled Oakville plant, then the costs from the now cancelled Mississauga power plant, and now we have \$420 million lost in surplus power sales to Quebec and the United States. Added up, we could very well have another billion-dollar boondoggle here.

We're paying above-market prices for renewable energy that the grid doesn't need and then selling it else-

where when it's not needed at below cost. This is sheer madness.

Minister, will you admit the green energy program has failed and pull back from the FIT subsidies which have led to job-killing energy prices?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: A little context: The two years previous to when we started in 2003, they paid almost a billion dollars to import power, and we're making money from the exports. It's a long-term approach.

But you know, cleaning up the air in the province of Ontario is important. It costs money for dirty air. It can cost \$4 billion every year for dirty air from coal production, which they did. We save not only the money for hospitals, but we improve the lives of Ontarians, we protect the lives of Ontarians. We lessen the human suffering from dirty air.

The choice is clear: They're for coal, we're for clean. We chose clean on behalf of the people of Ontario and we stand by that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce two members in our gallery, Herb Wagner and Murray Pollard, who are both male breast cancer survivors. They're here today for the presentation of a petition that has been signed by hundreds of people calling for the third week of October to be designated as Male Breast Cancer Awareness Week.

They've already succeeded in having this week established in the state of Florida and are hoping that Ontario will establish this week to increase education and awareness of this disease and save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I hope to present the petition at the end of routine proceedings to declare that week as Male Breast Cancer Awareness Week in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll do my best. Further introductions?

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CARLETON PLACE AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, for the past eight years, Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital has been appealing to the Ministry of Health for redevelopment funding and approval. The population growth in Carleton Place in this time has been significant, and demands for services and beds have increased well beyond the hospital's ability to serve under its current conditions.

Unfortunately, the Carleton Place hospital board has had to weave its way through the bureaucratic health care maze this government has created. The hospital board has had to deal with countless arms of the Ministry of Health, yet neither the Champlain LHIN nor the capital funding branch will commit to the board that the redevelopment will move forward. Ministry of Health staff have presented a proposal to cabinet with a recommendation to move forward, yet this government has stalled and is not proceeding.

This government has demonstrated that hospital proposals and promises are nothing more than a political football that can be punted about at a whim in an attempt to score political gain. It is disappointing, because the people of my riding expect that a redeveloped hospital in Carleton Place is essential to their health care. They believe that political and electoral gain ought not to be the determining factors for hospital funding.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, families in Ontario are facing a crisis in child care. As many may be aware, here in the city of Toronto a number of wards are facing losses of 25% to 50% of their regulated child care spaces. When I talk to people from northern Ontario and rural Ontario, they face even more dire situations.

All-day kindergarten is a useful thing, but the current process of implementation is not working. It's not addressing the transition costs. The Liberal government is not helping families who need child care through the summer. The tragic outcome of this poor implementation is that we may see large-scale closure of child care centres for younger children across this province.

Dalton McGuinty needs to stand up now and assure the parents of this province that he will not see closure of child care centres; that he will make sure that families and children are protected.

HEALING CYCLE FOUNDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the Healing Cycle Foundation is a volunteer-based, registered charity that honours the end-of-life journey taken by those living with a life-threatening illness. Volunteers do this by raising funds to support hospice palliative care programs for individuals at the end of life and to compassionately deal with their loved ones.

On Sunday, June 24, 2012, the Healing Cycle Foundation hosts its annual 10-, 25-, 50-, 100- and 160-kilometre bicycle ride in Streetsville. All ride donations directly support hospice palliative care in Ontario.

In 2011, the foundation achieved its fundraising goal of \$1 million for the palliative care unit at Credit Valley Hospital. Contributions helped build the new 10,000 square-foot, 15-bed centre at Credit Valley Hospital.

This new palliative care facility at Credit Valley Hospital has been named after the Healing Cycle Foundation. It will house a comprehensive family-centred program to

meet the needs of patients and their families when an illness does not respond to treatment.

Thank you to the residents and the businesses in Mississauga who contribute to the Healing Cycle Foundation. I encourage everyone to volunteer, donate or register to ride in the 2012 event at thehealingcycle.ca.

LESLIE FROST

Ms. Laurie Scott: On Friday, November 25, I had the honour to both attend and participate in a ceremony commemorating the gravesite of the Honourable Leslie Frost in Lindsay.

Leslie Frost, known in his day as "Old Man Ontario" and the "Laird of Lindsay," was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1937. He served the province as Treasurer, Minister of Mines and, of course, 12 years as Premier, from 1949 until 1961.

Leslie Frost championed small-town values in a time of large economic growth for this province. During his tenure, he led Ontario's post-war economic development, helped complete the St. Lawrence Seaway, and oversaw unprecedented expansion of Ontario's school system, highways and hospitals.

The Frost government introduced public hospital insurance to the province, which would be expanded by his successors to become the OHIP system of today.

The government of Leslie Frost was the first to pass laws providing penalties for racial, ethnic and gender discrimination. These laws, introduced in the early 1950s as the Fair Employment Practices Act and Fair Accommodation Practices Act, started a movement in Ontario politics that produced the Ontario Human Rights Code in 1962.

Many of his contemporaries still live in Lindsay and recall fondly the things he said and did in the barbershop and local restaurants.

I am particularly honoured to represent the same part of the province and many of the same constituents that this great MPP and visionary Premier did so many years ago.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

NORMES D'EMPLOI

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, there is a growing problem across Ontario. It was one of the major concerns in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton. I heard story after story from constituents who are experiencing this very same problem. The problem is precarious employment.

One of my constituents, Bhavan Kaur, told me her story, where she has been working at the same company at the same position for over two years and in those two years she has never transitioned to a full-time job. The company pays \$20 per hour, but after the temporary agency takes their portion she's left with \$10 per hour, with no benefits, no security—not a fair wage.

Something must be done to protect Ontario families.

Nous devons faire quelque chose pour aider les familles ontariennes.

HUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Mario Sergio: Just a few years ago, a commitment was made to build a new hospital in the northwest area of Toronto serving the residents of York West as well. Thanks to the commitment, the vision and the perseverance of the CEO of the Humber River Regional Hospital, Mr. Ruben Devlin, and of the hospital board and staff, the dream is now a reality.

Last Friday, December 2, joined by my colleagues MPP Monte Kwinter and MPP Laura Albanese, hospital board members and staff, the groundbreaking took place.

The new Humber River Regional Hospital will be the first fully digital hospital in North America. I am proud to say, Speaker, that this will raise the benchmarks in reliability, access to instant information and seamless communication.

The new hospital will be a leader in technological advancements, setting the standards of excellence in environmental sustainability, healthy indoor environments, efficient use of natural resources, and energy conservation.

I am proud to say that this new hospital is one of 18 hospitals being built by our government in the last few years.

1310

With the new Humber River Regional Hospital on its way, our people, our community and generations to come will enjoy excellent in-hospital care delivered by the best-qualified medical professionals, aided by the latest and most innovative technologies. I look forward to the official opening in 2015, as it will usher in a new era of hospital care in York West for all our residents.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to remind the McGuinty government that for six weeks now residents of York region have been held hostage by the ongoing transit strike. It is clear that negotiations are not going to resolve this strike. York region residents are losing jobs and are forced to spend extra money on cab fare to keep the jobs that they have, and students can't get to school. Yet the McGuinty government has done absolutely nothing. It has in fact turned its back on the residents of Thornhill and York region.

They have voted against my bill to end the strike and they refuse to give York region the same rights and protections against transit disruptions that they have granted the city of Toronto. Once again, they are trying to shift the blame, this time by hiding behind the regional government, though the regional government made it clear that they won't end the strike. This blame game is making victims out of York region commuters. Just the other day I received a message from a constituent: "The service connects with TTC, GO and other transit services

so it has impact on many workers, students and businesses throughout the GTA." So the question is, how long will the McGuinty government be willing to keep this strike going?

Today, once again, I have the following message to deliver from my constituents in Thornhill and the residents of York region to the Premier and the Minister of Labour: Take your responsibility to the people of this province seriously. End the York region transit strike today. Give York region the same rights and protections you gave the city of Toronto and make York region transit an essential service.

LES HORNE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's with sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to Les Horne. He was a passionate defender of children's rights and the first provincial child advocate for Ontario.

Les passed away over the summer in Oakville, but he left behind an incredible legacy. Les Horne truly believed that children, especially those who are most vulnerable, deserve to be heard, and he dedicated his life to helping raise their voices. His greatest volunteer achievement is often considered to be his dedicated work with Defence for Children International, which is committed to promoting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I was privileged to serve on the board of the Halton Children's Aid Society with Les. I found out he was also a very strong advocate for community supports rather than for institutional care. He led a group that recommended the closure of Ontario's large institutions in favour of smaller, community-based homes.

Les's activities on behalf of children are simply too long to list here—proof of his willingness to act whenever somebody needed a hand.

I'd like to extend my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Les Horne. He was a very proud native of my own birthplace of Liverpool, England, and a true children's champion for Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Julia Munro: People in York region are still waiting for someone to help them by ending the York region transit strike. This strike is hurting people trying to get to their jobs, to school or to their doctor, or just to buy groceries.

One constituent has to take time off work to drive her daughter to school, and there are many who tell us the same story. Another, Deb, has to pay \$75 for gas every week, as she cannot take the bus. Guy cannot take his son to the mall—or anywhere else, for that matter. Bev wonders what the effects of the strike are on retailers in York region—which is, I think, a good question. George asks what the continuing strike means for the environment, global warming and the green approach to the environment. These are real people who are hurting because of the strike. Social agencies tell me that this

strike is devastating for the most vulnerable people. These are people who don't have a car. They can't afford a taxi, and they are dependent on the support they receive through York region's agencies. They are, in effect, being denied the support they need.

People in York region want it to end and they need it to end. Only the Ontario government can bring this strike to an end, and we need you to step up and take action.

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

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2011 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And we're reading it, Speaker—in French, to boot.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope so.

PETITIONS

MALE BREAST CANCER

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, each year, an estimated 45 men will die of male breast cancer in Canada, a number that is expected only to increase; and

"Whereas breast cancer is widely believed to be a disease specific to women, and due to a general lack of awareness that men can also develop breast cancer, men are typically diagnosed at a late stage; and

"Whereas promoting awareness and education about male breast cancer is critical to improving the health and well-being of men throughout Ontario, facilitating earlier detection, improving the prognosis of men who have been diagnosed with the disease and ultimately preventing further loss of life; and

"Whereas, in remembrance of the many men who have lost their lives or are fighting for their lives,

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

"That the third week of October be designated as Male Breast Cancer Awareness Week in Ontario."

I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker, as I wholeheartedly agree with this. I thank the participants for bringing this forward to the attention of all of the Legislature.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael Harris: On behalf of the many parents with children enrolled in daycare programs in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, I am pleased to read the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Waterloo Region District School Board (hereinafter 'the board') proposes to implement a before-

and-after-school child care program in their schools for children ages four to seven years, effective September 2012;

"Whereas the board intends to prohibit all daycare centres currently partnered with schools from continuing to provide the same services;

"Whereas the board intends to charge \$27 per day for the same services that the YWCA charges \$16 per day;

"Whereas the implementation of such a program would result in the loss of revenue for the daycare centres currently partnered with schools, further resulting in either a fee increase to child care services for children three years and under (\$1,500 plus per month) or the complete closure of child care programs for children three years and under;

"Whereas the result would be create a crisis in child care for parents in this region who require good-quality, affordable child care for their children three and under, which already suffers from a severe shortage of such services...."

I will affix my name to this petition and give it to Danica to take to the table.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions; 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 in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital," now called Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

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

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "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;
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“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 will affix my name to this and give it to Sebastian, our great page, to take to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from Bruce–Grey. Sorry; I mean—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Simcoe–Grey.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very kind of you.

“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 agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHILD CARE

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale–High Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Parkdale–High Park. I was just looking at another member. Carry on, member.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it says:

“Whereas the government of Ontario is not providing their fair share of funding for child care subsidies with enough capital transitional funding for child care centres experiencing financial problems due to full-day learning;

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

“To fund their actual 80% share of child care subsidies and provide adequate transitional funding due to full-day learning.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to page Tara to be delivered.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a new policy from the Electrical Safety Authority that mandates that all electrical contractors must have at least one licensed master electrician on their staff for every business effective December 31, 2011, is forcing small contracting businesses in Ontario out of business;

“Whereas this ESA policy severely impacts small electrical contracting businesses in Ontario. George, in my riding in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who has been in the electrical trade for the past 51 years and a small business owner for the past 36 years, who has good standing with the Electrical Safety Authority, Ontario Hydro and local utilities, who follows the same rules and regulations as the ESA, follows the same electrical codes, adheres to the same inspections and pays the same fees as large companies, will not be allowed to renew his electrical contractor licence. Effective December 31, 2011, George will no longer be licensed to practise in Ontario” and “will be forced to close his small business.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Consumer Services to direct the Electrical Safety Authority of Ontario to modify the licensing requirements to allow small electrical contractors and self-employed electricians to work in the residential and rural market without the necessary burden of obtaining a master electrician licence or, at the very minimum, grandfather those who are currently qualified and entitled to work in Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and will be signing it.

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to the Bala Falls. 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 on 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.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “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 over 200 feet (60 metres) 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.”

Mr. Speaker, I will sign that petition. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE CRÉDIT D’IMPÔT POUR L’AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre

en oeuvre le crédit d’impôt pour l’aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I’m very pleased to have the opportunity to rise this afternoon and to speak in support of Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. As we outlined in the speech from the throne, as we work on moving Ontario forward, as we look at dealing with the challenges that we face, we will be giving priority to programs that both address the needs of Ontario families and strengthen the economy, and the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit is an example of just such a program. It will help both families and the economy.

In particular, if the proposed Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, is passed, it will do a number of things. Firstly, it will help seniors stay in their homes longer. Secondly, if family members actually have seniors living with them, it will help those family members who have a senior living with them. It helps the taxpayers, because staying at home always costs less than long-term care, so it’s good for the taxpaying public. We believe that it will support about \$800 million in home renovation activity and support about 10,500 jobs per year, so it’s clearly good to help stimulate the economy as well.

So, how does this work? Well, if the legislation is passed, and I certainly hope that the members opposite will be supporting Bill 2, effective October 1, 2011—so, in fact, the date for the bill will be retroactive to October 1, 2011—senior homeowners, senior tenants, people who share a home with a senior relative, any of those, would be allowed to claim a refundable tax credit up to \$1,500 a year for expenses related to permanent modifications to the home.

Now, when we began to debate this the other day, Speaker, I noticed that some of the comments from the official opposition were about, “Oh, well, you shouldn’t allow people who are tenants to access this sort of a thing because it wouldn’t be a good business deal”—that is, to upgrade a leased space as opposed to an owned space. I really thought that that indicated a certain lack of being in touch with reality, quite frankly, as to the circumstances in which lots of our seniors live, because if we think about different ridings around Ontario—and I understand that it varies dramatically from riding to riding, but if you look at the general mix of where people live in Ontario, there are lots of people who never in their life own their own home. Home is a leased space. We need to recognize that. Furthermore, there are lots of seniors who may once have owned their own home but who have chosen to sell their home as they find themselves becoming empty nesters—they don’t need a big home—and have decided to move into leased space, a smaller apartment or maybe a small townhouse or something, because they choose to do that at that stage of their life.

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So to say, “No, no, why would you have this apply to people who lease a space,” seems to me to be a very odd

comment. I can think of all sorts of examples where, with the support of being able to have an accessible leased space that meets the mobility needs of the senior, it in fact might be a very good quality-of-life investment for a senior to upgrade a leased space.

I can think of a senior who maybe has a pet. They're living alone; they have a pet. There might be another accessible apartment to rent, but the accessible apartment might not allow pets. It's much better to upgrade the leased space you've already got to allow you to keep that pet, because in lots of cases, if there's a senior living alone, that pet is an important companion. That would be a case where you might want to upgrade a leased space for quality of life.

What about a case where maybe there's a senior couple in a townhouse? Yes, there might be someplace they could rent that's accessible, but one member of the couple needs the accessibility modifications; another member of the couple might still be mobile and actually enjoy the freedom that a townhouse gives to get out into the garden and do a little bit of gardening on the patio. That might be very important to that particular couple—so again, an instance. Maybe somebody has been living in the same apartment for years. It is home. Maybe it's got a great view; they love watching the sunset. There are all kinds of reasons why people would choose to upgrade a leased space.

So I do not think that it behooves us, as members of the Legislature, to try to tell people that if you're going to upgrade the space you live in, you have to own it. We're, in fact, trying to provide the flexibility for the senior that this tax credit would be available regardless of whether the space the senior lives in is owned by the senior or perhaps they live with a family member, so it's owned by the family member, or it may, in fact, be a leased space. So that would be the strategy we are looking at.

Now, what we know, and the reason underlying this from a quality-of-life point of view, is that we know that in lots of cases seniors prefer to stay in their own home. In fact, most seniors prefer to stay in their own home as long as possible. One of the impediments to that is often that the home just doesn't meet the mobility needs and accessibility needs that the senior has. However, if you can make the home that the senior wants to stay in—it's their familiar space—accessible, then, along with some of the other community supports, it's a great opportunity for the senior to live at home.

I think of some of the supports that are available in my riding of Guelph: Meals on Wheels, where you can get a hot meal each day delivered to your door. That's a service that is available in lots of communities around Ontario that helps support the other needs of people staying in their own home. I've got another service that is really interesting, which I think is relatively unique to Guelph: Some of the Aging at Home money in Guelph—one of the recipients of that is actually the Guelph family health team, and in Guelph the vast majority of family doctors belong to the Guelph family health team. Their Aging at Home program actually is providing one of their

registered nurses to go out and to do calls to seniors in their homes. This would be for things like: The nurse goes into the home and checks on the meds. Maybe there are new meds or maybe the family is concerned that the person isn't managing the meds properly, so the nurse would go into the home, look at how the meds are organized and see if there's some way that it can be organized better to make sure that the senior actually gets the right meds at the right time. Maybe it's as simple as: They stored them in the upstairs bathroom but they really should be on the kitchen table so that they access them at mealtime when they need them. But they have a look at: How do we make sure you get the right meds?

Often it will be somebody who has had some sort of an acute health episode and is now being released home. There's concern about how the person will be able to manage at home, so the nurse from the family health team may do a few check-ins just to make sure that that person is coping okay once they're released from hospital.

You might have somebody who is in the early stages of dementia, and they can still manage at home, but having the nurse go in periodically to evaluate how the senior is coping in their own setting is very helpful in terms of the doctor knowing at what point the person is coping okay or if they need extra support from the health system.

But when we put those things together, the supports that are available in the community and the physical renovation of the home to make the physical situation suitable, many more people can stay in their own homes, and that is a very good thing.

Okay, so how would this work? If the legislation is passed, in order to claim the tax credit, the senior or the family members, whoever is going to be responsible, would obviously have to get the receipts from the suppliers, the receipts from the contractors, and you would submit those when you do your personal income tax.

Here is the total eligible cost for the year—and this is something that would be available each year you do your income tax. What I'm describing is for one year, but it would be available next year and next year and the year after that, if that's necessary for that particular senior. But each year, you could submit up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses, and the credit would be 15%, or \$1,500, that would be refunded to the senior. Because it's a refundable tax credit, even if the senior doesn't actually owe \$1,500 in taxes, they would still get the benefit. That is, you could get that, part of that or all of it, for that matter, as a cheque, because it's a refundable tax credit.

So what are the sorts of things that would be possible? The obvious ones are things like the ramp, so you can get in and out of the front door. I know as I was going door to door, I was finding more and more homes in Guelph where somebody has built a ramp so that one or another member of the family can get in and out the door in a wheelchair or maybe with a walker. But often, depending on the layout of the property, those ramps can be quite extensive and quite expensive, so getting some assistance

with building that ramp can be really problematic. In this case, getting some help would be very, very helpful.

Another big-ticket item that has gotten a lot of attention is seniors who live in two-storey houses being able to install chairlifts so that they can get up to the bedroom floor. Again, that's a very important and often very costly renovation.

Another instance would be creating some sort of walk-in bathtub or walk-in shower—so replacing the tub, which often becomes quite hazardous for people to have to try to step in and out of, and getting up and down is problematic. So being able to replace the conventional tub with some sort of walk-in tub or shower would be something that would be permitted.

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So those are sort of big-ticket items, but there's a lot of smaller things. They all add to the accessibility and the safety of the home, and they add up if you have to do several of them: things like the grab bars that you see in an accessible washroom, getting those grab bars installed in your washrooms at home, or handrails along corridors so that you don't have to have the walker to get from room to room; you can just use the railing along the hall.

We talked about ramps and things.

Widening door passages: If somebody is in a chair, doors in homes, and particularly doors in bathrooms, are often narrower than a wheelchair requires. So you could widen the door, either just replacing—cutting a hole. Sometimes you can simply re-hinge the door so you've got the swing-away hinges. So you might simply be able to re-hinge doors.

Often, if somebody's now in a wheelchair, you might want to lower the counters in the kitchen and in the bathroom. And often if you've got a senior, they have trouble bending, and in particular bending and looking in under something. So the renovation might be to install pullout drawers so that you can pull things out and not have to be crawling under the cupboard to try and see if you can find the can of soup that you're looking for or the pot you're looking for at the back of the cupboard. Those pullout drawers can make a tremendous difference to the person that's there.

Sometimes, if you've got somebody who's in a wheelchair, you need to just change the cupboards so there aren't any cupboards under the sink, so that the wheelchair will just slide in under a counter and you can get up close.

And then there are all kinds of issues where as hands get arthritic, or if you're like me and you're getting BlackBerry thumb, you have faucets that have levers rather than twisting, and it may be necessary to change door handles and door locks to those that are easier to handle for arthritic hands.

In some cases it might be reconfiguring the house so that there's a bedroom on the first floor; it might be creating a granny flat.

There are all sorts of things that would be permissible. It's not just the two or three sort of big-ticket items that have caught a lot of attention. It would be all that myriad

of things that make it possible for seniors to live in their own homes.

We do understand that we're living in a recessionary time. We do understand that we have to look at expenses, and when you give a tax credit, there is a bill associated with that. We think in the 2011-12 year, if we get the same sort of take-up that the federal government got on their home reno tax credit—which was a more general one; it wasn't just senior-focused—we think it could cost up to \$60 million because we've made it retroactive back to October. It could be up to \$60 million. And I want to assure you, Speaker, and anyone else who is looking that in fact we have found cost savings in other files to offset that \$60 million that would be required to provide this tax credit this year.

So I think this is an excellent program and I certainly hope that we will have the support of all members in this House in this program, which will make it much easier for seniors to stay in their homes.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Mr. Speaker, throughout the recent election period, the people of my riding told me time and time again that the cost of staying in their own homes was getting unaffordable, but it was the seniors who, without doubt, were the loudest voice in asking us to do something to help them out. They weren't talking about special renovations. They were talking about the basic expenses that everyone else was talking about—home heating, hydro costs, property taxes—but from the perspective of someone who was on a fixed income. But what help does this government offer? They tell them that they must cut costs by taking their showers and doing their laundry in the middle of the night—some answer for someone who has contributed so much to this country. They have seen this Liberal government raise the cost of living in their home to a point where they cannot cover the basic costs and they are forced to decide whether they should buy food or heat their homes. These people don't have \$10,000 to spend to access this grant.

It is time to listen to what the people are telling us. It is time to pay attention, and it is time to take action. Mr. Speaker, it's time for this Liberal government to join forces with the rest of the House and get its spending in order and help out the working families and the seniors and give them some real help. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It was a clear message that I received when I was knocking on the doors during the campaign, from many, many doors, from many, many seniors that I met: They need help. They need help with their day-to-day activities. They need help with the issues that face them. They need help with purchasing a full prescription instead of buying half a prescription. They need help getting to their doctor's appointments by travelling to those appointments by roads; they can't

afford the gas to get to those appointments. They need help in their homes. They need help, period.

This piece of legislation, although it's going to assist with certain passages as far as widening doors, ramps, lowering counters and jobs—it's all good; it is good, and it is more than likely going to be something that I feel comfortable in being able to support. However, at the end of the day, it's going to be for the limited individuals who will benefit from this, and the vast majority of our seniors will not get any benefit out of this program because they can't afford it. It is not there. They are challenged with the regular costs on a monthly basis of making ends meet, and they just don't have those funds in order to invest in this. That's the reality that we're facing.

Right now what they're asking for is, "Give me a break now. Give me a break in my home so I can have that additional \$20, \$30, \$40 that I can have every month." There's an idea there. Embrace that idea and give that opportunity to Ontarians to choose how they want to spend their monies in their own ways. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was delighted to hear the comments from my colleague from Guelph.

You know, I've got a bit of a connection to Guelph. My late mother grew up on a farm just outside of Guelph called Rockwood, Ontario—a beautiful community. And then after my mother's parents left the farm, they moved into Guelph and they settled on Nottingham Street in Guelph, Ontario. It's just a stone's throw away from the Church of Our Lady, which is one of the most beautiful Catholic churches in the province of Ontario. The architecture is supreme. And I remember when I was a little guy visiting my grandmother—I used to spend the month of August there—I really noticed a number of seniors who were in Guelph there, particularly around Nottingham Street. They were going to a number of seniors' services sponsored by the Church of Our Lady. I must say, when you look at the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, as articulated extremely well by the member from Guelph, I have this vision in my mind of those seniors today who are on Nottingham Street—close to Gordon Street there in Guelph, Ontario—and I can see them taking the opportunity to take advantage of this, and not only the seniors themselves but the families of seniors.

You know, that aspect of this bill has been lost during the debate, where, for example, Mr. Speaker, if you had your aging parents and they're living with you and your lovely wife in Fergus, Ontario, and you decided that you want to retrofit your shower and your tub or add a stairlift to your beautiful home in Fergus, Ontario, you would be able to take advantage of the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, and that's what the member for Guelph was clearly talking about.

I know she's in constant contact with the seniors in her community. I know she visits every seniors' club in the

riding of Guelph on a continuous basis. I know they have activities at the University of Guelph, and she's there. She's listening to them very, very carefully, and she knows that those seniors in Guelph are going to take advantage of this program and go to Home Hardware and create some economic activity in Guelph.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I take great pleasure in having the opportunity to stand and respond to the seniors' home renovation tax credit. I too have heard from a number of seniors, and still am, since the election—prior to, during, and since. The seniors that we have heard from in my office have indicated to a person that there are very few people who would be in a position to take advantage of this home tax credit because of the escalation of the minimum \$10,000 to take advantage of the maximum.

The people we heard from said that they would like to see the HST removed from heating, electricity and energy. That would have a far bigger impact. That would affect all seniors, at whatever income level, especially the lower-income seniors who, because of the HST on their energy bills, take the bigger hit on their bills. It would sure make a big difference to them.

I know that seniors—my late mother, if she would have been in her home, would have been in a position that maybe she would have been able to take advantage of this, but she's no longer with us, so she can't. But there are a number other seniors throughout the province, and throughout my riding especially, who would, I think, benefit far more if we were able to remove the HST off the energy price and do them some justice there, where they could actually take advantage on a day-to-day basis on other bills that they pay, whether it's gasoline they buy at the pumps or the HST that they pay on energy for electricity, hydro, home heating etc. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the four members who have offered questions and comments on the member for Guelph's presentation. We now will return to member for Guelph, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Algoma–Manitoulin, Peterborough and Sarnia–Lambton.

I didn't realize that your grandparents were in Rockwood. Of course, the Speaker is very interested in the fact that they came from Rockwood, because that's a town that has passed back and forth between the Speaker and I as to which one of us actually represents it. But I'm very pleased that they landed in Guelph.

Nottingham Street is a lovely part of the old part of town, but very typical of the houses that would require some sort of renovation to make them more accessible: stairs everywhere, with narrow doors sometimes to the back of the house. So those would be exactly the sorts of homes we would want to pick up.

I do have to comment on the comment that the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry made about having showers in the middle of the night. Let's get our facts straight here: The off-peak time goes from 7 p.m. in the evening to 7 a.m. in the morning. If you have your shower at 7:05—not the middle of the night; 7:05—it's going to be cheaper, or if you're doing your laundry. And it's all day—24 hours—on Saturday and Sunday that it's off-peak. So no senior in this province needs to have their shower in their newly installed shower in the middle of the night. It just isn't required.

The other thing that I think we need to keep an eye on is that there are a lot of other tax credits specifically targeted at seniors. The healthy home tax credit is but one thing targeted at seniors, and I sincerely hope all members will support Bill 2.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 2, which is named by the government the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, 2011. Based on the name, it sounds like a great bill, of course; the government is very good at naming things so they sound pretty good. But I'm afraid this bill is more about politics than it really is about making a big difference for the vast number of seniors across our province.

I think our critic, the member from Thornhill, who just came into the Legislature—I'm sure he's been busy with the Auditor General's report today—did a fine job in his response of pointing out how this bill—you know, it sounds great, but it really affects a pretty tiny number of seniors across the province that really do need some form of help. He pointed out that the median income for seniors in Ontario—that's the largest number of seniors falling into an income category—if you're single, is \$25,000, and if you're a couple, it's \$45,000. The way this tax credit works is, you have to spend \$10,000 to get the benefit of a \$1,500 tax credit. You can spend it on, I believe, things that will help the accessibility of your home but not improve the value of your home. So it's fairly tightly defined.

I think on this side of the House we want to see seniors have money left over to be able to stay in their homes as long as possible and make their homes as comfortable as possible. The problem with this is that the people that need it aren't going to have the \$10,000. Certainly, with that median income of \$25,000 for a single, they're not going to be able to spend half of their gross income on renovations to their house, and which specifically won't increase the value of the house as well. And those people that can afford it—and, I might point out, our critic noted that he turned 65 this year, or turns 65 this year—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't make me older than I am.

Mr. Norm Miller: —is soon to turn, sometime in the next year—and he would qualify for it. But he also pointed out that if he was going to spend the \$10,000 to

make the renovation to his house, he would do it. He doesn't need this tax credit to be able to benefit.

So I think the problem is that it's going to benefit those that don't necessarily need it, and those that really need it won't be able to afford to do the work because they won't have the money, or the ability to even borrow the money. So certainly it's more about the name of the bill sounding like the government's doing something profound, when really it's not doing that much. It's affecting a very, very tiny percentage of the seniors and not benefiting those who truly need it. I note that if you're receiving some sort of assistance like ODSP, then you also are not allowed to benefit from this tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's safe to say that what we heard, and what I hear in my riding all the time, is that people—if you're going to do something that would benefit everyone, the most logical thing, certainly, and it was part of our election platform, would be to remove the HST from heating costs and from electricity costs. I think the NDP had proposed and had a private member's bill put forward to just remove the HST from heating costs. The PCs, in their election platform, had proposed to remove the HST not only from heating but from electricity as well.

This is something that not just seniors, but all those folks out there, especially in the lower-income levels who are struggling to pay their hydro bills, really want. I've got solid information from going door to door and also from people that have written to me, making it very clear that that's the thing they'd really like.

As an example, here's a letter from Sharon Watson in Sundridge:

"I am writing this letter in hopes that you can stop Hydro One from putting this new charge onto the"—it's about other additional charges, and we know how much hydro bills have gone up. "I am writing this letter in hopes that you can stop Hydro One from putting this new charge onto the already high hydro bill that the public is now receiving. This is nothing but blatant thievery. The 'smart meter' was not asked for by the public and we are already trying to adjust to the cheaper hours so as not to add to the hydro bill. Most seniors have been practising the 'green method' that was taught by their parents and grandparents before them by hanging out the clothes as way back when there were no such things as dryers; now, to add insult to injury, we must sometimes do laundry on a Sunday to benefit these cheaper hours due to inclement weather. Sunday was always supposed to be a day of rest (God's day); now that too has been changed.

"Hydro One has implemented this new meter so they alone must assume the cost of this new method to charge its clients, not ask the hard-working taxpayers to pay for a service not asked for or wanted.

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"My husband and I bought our house seven years ago. At that time we were paying approximately \$50 during the summer months and around \$120 in the winter months; now, it's anywhere from \$119 in the summer" months—more than double—"and upwards from \$150 to

\$180 in the winter months. The delivery charge is as much or more than the actual hydro used, not counting the regulatory charge, the debt retirement charge and then the HST. I would like to put this into perspective for you; we now are seniors and our house is 974 square feet. I am working two jobs just to keep afloat, and another charge is being added to the hydro bill that I can barely afford to pay now.

“Seniors are being asked to pay and pay but their income doesn’t increase with their daily living expenses. Something needs to be done to bring this money-grabbing company to its senses.

“You may use this letter as an example in the Legislature.”

It’s signed by Sharon Watson from Sundridge, Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, that’s a living, breathing person, who’s a senior, who’s working a job and is making it very clear that what they’d like to see is some sort of relief on their hydro bill. That is something that would affect all seniors, whereas this bill we’re talking about today, Bill 2, affects just a tiny percentage of seniors, seniors who have the \$10,000 to be able to spend on a renovation to increase accessibility, and those who don’t have the money aren’t able to benefit. They aren’t able to get the \$1,500 tax credit.

That’s the kind of thing that I’m hearing. As noted from that senior, in that letter from Sharon Watson, she points out that she’s working as well. I think what this Parliament should be focusing on is creating good jobs as well. There are lots of seniors, some because they want to and some out of necessity, continuing to work beyond age 65, as this senior pointed out she is doing. We need to be able to create good private sector jobs, not only for these seniors but for their kids, and their kids who may be playing a role in supporting the seniors in their later years. So we need to create those jobs.

That’s part of the reason that in this minority Parliament one of the focuses of the opposition has been to create good private sector jobs. I’m now the Northern Development and Mines critic, and last week I had an opportunity to ask a question about a company called Global Sticks, based in Oliver Paipoonge township near Thunder Bay. This is a company that received \$7 million from the government of Ontario. In fact, the McGuinty government did a big press release just in May of this year announcing they were creating 130 jobs, and yet, now we heard last week that the employees haven’t been paid and the company has, in fact, shut down. On the one hand, the government gave them money to create jobs, but on the other hand, we hear that it was death by 1,000 cuts, that it took two years to get the boiler’s certificate of approval from the Ministry of the Environment, that they didn’t have a wood supply despite just about every sawmill in the Thunder Bay except for one is shut down. There was no supply of fibre, as it’s called, and they had to initially get wood from Minnesota. As a result, these jobs that the government just spent a lot of money to try to create are now threatened, and those are the sorts of

jobs seniors need and their kids need as well to be able to have enough money to retire and live with dignity.

That’s been a real priority of the opposition, to do things that will create jobs. In my own riding, just last week was a bad week in that it was announced that the Tembec flooring plant in Huntsville is going to be closing. We’re going to be losing eight jobs in Huntsville from that Tembec flooring plant closing. Also, Grandview Resort in Huntsville, a long-established resort, is going to be closing some time this year. That’s at least another 80 jobs, and probably more, at Grandview. So just in one day last week in my riding, 160 good jobs were lost. That’s why we recognize that we have to do something in this province to get some private sector jobs created. Unfortunately, this bill, Bill 2, sounds good, but it’s not really addressing that problem. So that’s one of the focuses that the opposition has taken.

I’ve got some other letters that point out that people are struggling with their hydro bill, and I note that the Auditor General just came out with his report today. In that Auditor General’s report, he delivered a scathing indictment of Dalton McGuinty’s expensive energy experiments. The auditor revealed that the McGuinty government’s policies are driving up hydro bills. Well, the letter I just read makes that quite clear, that the green jobs claim from the Liberals is greatly inflated and that the Liberals never bothered to do any cost-benefit analysis of the big flagship \$7-billion Samsung deal. This is driving up energy costs for seniors.

It also pointed out, on the all-important job front, that they claimed through their Green Energy Act that there were going to be 50,000 jobs created. The Auditor General reports that many of these jobs are short-term jobs and that in fact they may be gone in just a few short years. The Auditor General estimates that 30,000 of these jobs are likely to be short-term construction jobs, lasting from one to three years.

The Auditor General also notes that studies in other jurisdictions have shown that for each job created through renewable energy, two to four jobs are often lost in other sectors as a result of higher electricity prices. So not only do we have seniors unable to pay their hydro bill and looking for some relief; actually, for each job you create, you lose a job.

As an example of that, Mr. Speaker, I’m now Northern Development and Mines critic. Really, one of the greatest opportunities for job creation in the north is the Ring of Fire. We hear the government speak about that a lot, but the Ring of Fire needs some help to be able to develop. Also, for the province to fully benefit from the resource, we need to process the ore here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the Ring of Fire is about 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay; there, they have a huge chromite discovery and nickel discovery. Once it’s eventually developed, they would concentrate the ore at the mine sites and then ship it, probably by slurry pipeline, to a road which needs to be built to Webequie, a First Nations community, by truck down to a railway, which then would go, ideally, to Timmins or Sudbury to be con-

centrated. The big question is, will that refining of the ore happen in Ontario at all, or will the train keep on going to Quebec, which has lower energy costs? Or, as has been asked in some questions in this Legislature as recently as today, will the ore just be shipped to China, where it would be refined there, and we'd lose out on those jobs?

The reason we'd lose out on the jobs is the point that a third of the cost of refining the chromite is energy. If our energy costs here in Ontario are completely out of whack with other jurisdictions—they're moving that way as a result of some of the policies of the government—then what happens is that we lose all those refining jobs and many, many other jobs in the province of Ontario.

As the opposition, we've been focusing on the priorities of jobs, but also we've been focusing, and we've been making, Mr. Speaker, some pretty constructive suggestions, on how to improve things. We've suggested that we need to have a change in the apprenticeship system in the province of Ontario. We need to modernize the apprentice system, create 200,000 skilled jobs positions and have it more integrated with community colleges. We had colleges here last week, and if you met with them, they pointed out that there's going to be a gap in the next few years. We need skilled workers, but we'll also have a higher unemployment rate and a greater demand for skilled workers. That can be solved by some of the measures we're proposing, by changing the apprenticeship ratio.

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We have this crazy system in Ontario where, as an example, if you're an electrician, if you're a small company, if you have one electrician you can have one apprentice; if you have two electricians you can have two apprentices; and—the member from Simcoe North can tell me if I get this wrong—if you have three electrician journeymen you can have three apprentices. To have four, you need six electricians. Talk about stopping a company from growing and stopping an opportunity for young people to get jobs.

To have five apprentices, you need nine journeymen, and if you lose one of those journeymen you've got to get rid of the apprentice. How ridiculous is that, especially when seven other provinces have a one-to-one ratio, which allows much more opportunity for young people to be able to get a job? So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the government has misplaced priorities.

The other focus that we, as the opposition, have been saying that the government needs to deal with is the debt crisis here in the province of Ontario, the fact that they're on track to double the debt of the province; that revenues, as the critic pointed out, were actually record revenues: I believe it was \$108 billion last year. But government spending just tends to keep going up, especially in wages, which is the biggest part of the budget.

So we've been making a very reasonable suggestion, and that is to have a public sector wage freeze so that we can get our finances under control. I believe it was pointed out by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that the public sector is currently being paid

about 27% higher than the private sector for similar jobs. So if you want to maintain services, then you really do need to have this wage freeze to save the government about \$2 billion a year and get us back towards a balanced situation.

Right now, the government's spending \$2 million an hour more than it's bringing in in revenue, and that is just simply not sustainable over the long term, as has been pointed out on numerous occasions. You just can't keep on spending that way—well, you can keep on spending that way as long as someone's willing to lend you money, but when they have actually stopped lending you money, all of a sudden you have no more money to spend. That's the case we see in places like Greece at this time. We don't want to be going down that road.

Unfortunately, the trend right now is in the wrong direction. We had a \$14-billion deficit last year—in other words, we spent \$14 billion more than we brought in last year—and this year, it's going up to \$16 billion. The finance minister likes to spin that as somehow an improvement, but the real numbers are that the deficit's actually growing this year.

I'm just about out of time, Mr. Speaker. So in conclusion, this bill would affect a very small number of seniors. If we did something like what was proposed by the opposition, to bring in relief in the form of taking the HST off of electricity bills in particular, this would be broad-based relief for all seniors. I have many more letters and emails from seniors in my riding which I could have read into the record; I didn't. Some of them have very large lettering pointing out that they're not happy. It's very clear that that is something that would benefit all seniors across the province, whereas this bill, Bill 2, will benefit just a very few seniors.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: The government bill to address the need to assist seniors to remain in their homes, while admirable and with good intent, will not help seniors in my riding and across the province that are in need. It will not help those on the line between poverty and just doing okay. They won't be able to take advantage of the tax credit because they don't have \$10,000 to spend, and those who live in apartments—their landlords aren't going to spend \$10,000 to get a \$1,500 tax credit.

The wait list in Niagara for affordable housing is two to 2.75 years for seniors for a bachelor apartment or a one-bedroom. There are 2,000 seniors in Niagara waiting for affordable housing, 1,000 in my riding of Welland alone, and more than 100,000 seniors across the province of Ontario live in poverty.

What seniors need is supportive care, supportive services. They need help with a bath; they need help to get their groceries. They need help with snow shovelling, with a little housekeeping and perhaps with some laundry. That's what will keep them in their homes.

They may need a bus pass that's paid for, some foot care or a ride to a medical appointment, and that will keep them in their homes.

They may need some new windows, some new doors or some insulation in their attic, and that may keep them in their homes. Having the HST off their home heating bills might give them a little relief as well.

What they need is sustainable health care and home care, and they need well-paid caregivers whom they can rely on to show up. This is what will keep them in their homes.

So I urge the government to consider all the debate we've had over the last few days and make some amendments to their bill or to change their bill in some way that will assist those most in need in our senior community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I was listening very carefully to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I have to say respectfully that he always addresses the matter and the issues he sees affecting the people that he represents.

Sometimes we would go back and forth with the member from Etobicoke Centre about who has the largest number of seniors, renters, tenants and people in need of some assistance. Maybe this could be challenged by another member who has the largest number, but I have to say that I have a very large senior population in my area, and they are not too well off. They belong to a particular segment in our society that doesn't have the luxury of hundreds of thousands of dollars in RRSPs or savings. These are the people who usually live on maybe the lowest pension that they get from the federal government, and maybe—maybe—they have something from the employer. But this is the class that perhaps wouldn't have a private pension plan or one from the company they worked for.

I have to say that if my seniors would hear me as their representative saying, "Well, I am not going to support this bill, because it only helps a small group in my community," I think they would lynch me. I think they would really be offended.

What we do in this House, Speaker, and what the government is trying to do, is assist people in need. A lot of people in my area would take advantage, as long as there is some possibility, some opportunity that the government offers them to help themselves.

This is one way. I support it, and I hope that the government will support it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I just want to compliment our member from Parry Sound and say that it goes further than a smaller segment.

We're all assuming that once you turn 65, you're going to need to renovate your house to stay there. I come from the health care system, and I'll tell you now that a lot of people do not need this tax benefit until they're in their mid- to late 70s and 80s. So there's an even smaller segment of society that will be going after this tax benefit. Look at our member from Thornhill—I don't want to pick on him today. He's 65 this year. He is

highly, highly not needing to have his house renovated any time soon.

I met a lady from my constituency last week, and she told me she had to borrow money in order to make ends meet; her pension was not enough. She was saying to me, "If you can do anything at all, help me lower my tax burden." I think that supporting the HST off our heating, which the members of the NDP are supporting, will give that lady and any other constituent, senior or not a senior, the tax relief they need that they can make ends meet day to day.

I would suggest—I don't want to just say it's a bad idea—that if you have \$64-million-plus to spend, because we don't even know how much this is going to cost at the end of the day—why not put it toward getting our deficit down? If you really, really want to spend the money—I know it's a problem—why not give more surgery times? Let's get the wait time down. Put it toward surgeons.

1420

Put it towards long-term-care beds; get the people out of the hospitals. Let's start spending the money wisely for everybody's benefit. Let's put more money into home care so that more nurses can see these patients. That's the key. It's not renovating the house to keep them in it; it's giving them the supports they need in their house to stay there.

As I said before, there's not enough of a spectrum of the population that is going to benefit from this tax credit, so I do not support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, as I always do. He has wonderful wisdom that comes from the near north and, I guess, from some of the more rural places of this province.

He talked about broad-based relief, and I think that's what is being lost here in all of this debate. He has hit on the most key aspect: What kind of government program is going to help the most people?

As I listened to him, he was talking about taking the HST off hydro. I must say that I agree with the comments that he had to make. If you want to help the most people, you will give broad-based relief, not specific relief that only a few people will take advantage of. To hear members of the government, they talk as if every senior is going to have \$10,000, or a major portion thereof, and every senior is going to want to invest that in his or her house. The reality is—as the member from York West said, he has many poor seniors. I would ask him: Do most of those poor seniors live in subsidized units or rental properties? I think the answer he would tell, in all honesty, would be yes, and it is those people who would receive almost nothing of benefit from this bill.

Who will receive benefit are those seniors who have the wherewithal, the financial money to put down in order to put in an elevated device, a new bathroom, a ramp. Those are the seniors who will see some return on

their investment. Others will not. And as the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka clearly put out, the idea of affecting every single senior, of giving the money to those who are most in need, is where this government should be headed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments.

I now return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his response: two minutes.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the member from Welland and the members from York West, Elgin–Middlesex–London and Beaches–East York for their comments.

I'd like to come back to the point that I think removing the HST from hydro and home heating bills would be much more effective, and I quote a letter from E.R. Brown from Katrine in my riding. In it they say, "I am a senior with a fixed income, and like other seniors it is a shame we have to pay a tax on home heating in Canada. Heating your home is a necessity of life. You cannot live without heat or you will die. I cannot think of any country in the world that taxes a necessity of life. I think the removal of this tax should be the first order of business that this government must do, and do now. Please do not think a tax refund is the thing to do. That is wrong." He specifically says to take the tax off of heating/electricity bills and home heating instead of a tax refund, so it's very much exactly what we're talking about today.

I got a letter from another constituent, Brock Napier, who was writing about the NDP proposing to eliminate the HST on the home heating bill, which we did support, which passed in this new minority Parliament. But he writes, "The purpose of this letter is that the same proposal is applied to all those residents who heat their homes with hydro.

"I understand the PCs support this bill, so please make sure every homeowner is covered."

So I've got all kinds of emails and letters from constituents in my riding, and I'm sure other members do across the province. That's what seniors would like to see: more broad-based relief than this very, very narrow bill we see before us.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to take today's opportunity to follow a little bit of tradition and give the members a little bit of a brief background of where I came from and what Algoma–Manitoulin is composed of.

I'm happy to see certain individuals in this room, because I think it's important. I look at my fellow knight across the way from Elgin–Middlesex–London, and I'm quite pleased you're here, because we share many values in our community, and as family and as fathers of our children. It's really nice to have you here during my maiden speech.

This particular bill that we're talking about, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, is one that I'm really struggling with. Although we do see benefits coming out of it—and it would be actually foolish to deny those individuals who can actually secure those benefits in it—it really doesn't help the masses. That's where my concern is with this particular bill and what I'm struggling with. It sure is not what I heard from the people up in Algoma–Manitoulin as I was travelling through—the doors, the many community events and the people I have spoken to. A little bit more immediate relief is what they need: immediate relief as far as more affordability for themselves, immediate relief where they can see an actual figure in front of them that won't cost them up front. That's what I've been hearing from them.

Now, having said that, I do come from a very politically inclined family, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention a couple of individuals that have really encouraged me in my path as I was leading into my role as a politician. They would be my uncle Eldon Mantha in Gogama, who has been a very strong supporter of mine. Just across the way from him, where I lived for many years when I raised my family, is my *pépère*, although he's not my grandfather; he's my grandfather by marriage, and I'm quite honoured to call him my *pépère*. His name is *pépère Bidoux*, who always has something to say about anything that goes on in this Legislature, and it's always a joy to sit down with him.

I'll start with my uncle Eldon. We don't have the same political views; however, he's always been supportive of me as his nephew and how it was important for me to understand both sides—not make a decision, but really understand both sides so you can make an informed decision as to where you're going and what you're doing for your constituents.

That's why it was quite pleasing for me—it was really a no-brainer—to go forward in presenting the private member's bill on removing the HST on home heating. You know, the first thing he said was, "Good for you. Good for the NDP doing something that was actually part of your message. Good for you."

However, his reserves, knowing his background, were, "You know, you're going to be fighting an uphill struggle, Mike, but don't give it up. Make sure you get there. Make sure you continue to fight for those who have asked for the help." And that's a commitment I gave to him.

As for my *pépère Bidoux*, there's a different story. Every time I sat down with him, he gave me a message. He said, "Mike, I want you to go to Queen's Park and get me some grants for my windows and get me some grants for my doors. That's what I want you to do."

Well, I told him, "You know, *pépère*, there are some opportunities there."

"Yeah, but it's gonna cost me. I don't want to have anything that costs me. I can't afford it."

I understand what he's telling me: Today everything is getting more expensive, and he doesn't have those savings. When you're in a small community in the north

like Gogama, where Sudbury, on one side, is two hours away, and Timmins, on the other side, is an hour away, you've got medical appointments, you've got doctors and you've got groceries to go pick up, you know, the costs add up, and you throw on the HST on their home. Well, you know what? The savings that he's accumulated his entire life are gone and have been gone for a long time. So he's suffering with that.

But he's telling me, "I want you to go there and do the best that you can," and that's something I can tell him and assure him that I'm going to do.

Now, many of the constituents I represent in Algoma-Manitoulin are in the same boat as my uncle Eldon and my pèpère Bidoux. Seniors are looking for help. They're reaching out. They're asking their politicians and their leadership, "Listen. Listen to us. Really listen to us, and help us where we know we need help. We don't need help with counters. We don't need help with doorways. We need immediate financial help," which is something that could benefit them, and that's removing the HST.

1430

Again, this piece of legislation is a good initiative. It's going to help some but it certainly won't help the mass, and that is my biggest concern with this.

You know, having said that, it begs to ask the question: I've got two of my loved ones and many of my constituents that are affected by this. Look at yourselves and look within. Look deep inside of yourselves and say and realize that this is definitely something that most of your constituents would benefit from. Instead of looking at the tax credit, look at the HST, because it is going to bring an immediate relief to everyone.

Having said that, I thought it was important for me to continue with the story to introduce myself to this Legislature and also to introduce what Algoma-Manitoulin is composed of. I want to let you know that my father, Bucko, was a man that worked through the MNR—worked his entire life, worked hard. However, as a young man, I lost him quite early. I didn't have that opportunity to have that game of pool with him or have that beer. But he did give me a lot of good traits, and one of them is, always be firm with your kids, but love them. Be tough, but make sure that you have an open heart when you're listening to them and always smile and have a good sense of humour when you're doing things. You will get more honey that way than in any other way. You will get a better reception, and the person that you're talking to, whether it is across the way or on the phone, will respond to that.

My mother, Rita Mantha, was involved in everything and anything. As a youth, many times I found myself asking questions: "Where is she? What is she doing?" She was helping her community. She was helping her church. She was helping First Nations. What she was doing was helping. It's something that she always did. It was her calling, and you know what? She put that little seed inside of me. That little seed has started to grow and has brought me here into this Legislature, and I look forward to growing relationships with everybody across

the way, everybody across this side, everybody in the Legislature. I look forward to growing those relationships.

With Mom, we worked on many campaigns, both provincial and federal. We worked tirelessly. It was something that was in our blood. My uncle, Conrad Carriere, also ran in 1987. He was, however, unsuccessful, but this win for me is like it was his win. He was so proud that somebody actually is going forward and bringing some of the family values that we had and that we wanted to share with Ontarians. It was ma tante Lucille who was the first to pick up the phone and give me a call the night that I had won the election.

Vous savez, ma mère était extrêmement intégrée dans les politiques et puis elle m'a vraiment allumé quand on s'est rendu à Timmins. On était là pour une convention et puis maman s'est présentée en avant—elle était une jeune demoiselle de Gogama et elle voulait tant se rendre à une convention à Ottawa. Elle a pris la parole et s'est adressée à la convention et a dit : « Rita Mantha de Gogama, veux, veux pas, elle s'en va à Ottawa. »

Tout le monde dans la salle s'est levé et a apprécié que maman, elle avait fait ça. Puis, vous savez, elle y a été, à Ottawa. Et puis c'est une attitude de même que ma mère m'a donnée et mise dans le corps, qu'on peut faire un changement si tu travailles et tu travailles fort.

My mom would be thrilled today. Unfortunately, she passed away a few years ago, and she would be my biggest fan right now. She's here. She's here. I hear her; she's here. She has her way of giving me a little bit of advice when I need it. She has a way of giving me a little bit of direction when things are tough, when the decisions are tough to be made. It's her good sense of family that has provided me with the good traits that I need to make good decisions for the constituents of Algoma-Manitoulin, and I truly look forward to representing them as best as I can and according to abilities that I have.

As a young man, I started my life in the forestry sector. I had my two sons, Matthieu and Roch, and my best friend in life, which is my wife, Pauline. From that point on, I started asking questions, because as a father, that's what you do. You don't always accept what is being given to you. So, with the assistance of my community, co-workers, friends and neighbours, they pushed me forward and supported me in asking those questions. Lo and behold, I didn't know but that's where my political career started getting moulded. People started looking at me, and I started listening, in a different way.

From there, I got involved in the labour movement. The labour movement prepared me with the tools that I needed to do this exact job: to do the research, to do the resources, to find the connections, to do the networking, to ask the questions, to send the letters. Those are essential tools that you need to do this job. I don't think there's a manual that can train us to do this job. You have to learn, you have to do it because it's inside of you. It's something that you feel, it's a calling to you, and I think that every single person that's in this Legislature has that calling.

There's another wonderful woman that was introduced in my life, during a time where I was faced with a lot of difficulties. Not just myself, but the forestry sector took a really bad downturn a few years ago. A woman by the name of Lillian Roe—she comes from the Goulais River area—provided me with a huge tool. The tool is how to listen to people, how to really listen when individuals are talking to you so that you can recognize the signs and identify with what their needs are. She is an amazing woman, and if ever you cross her path, you'll be so fortunate for being a student in one of her classes.

While I was working at the resource centre up in Dubreuilville, this was one of the most gratifying jobs I've ever done. You know, the most remarkable part about doing that job is that I was there helping them, but unknowingly to them, they were actually helping me, because I was as affected as they were. By building those relationships with those communities, by getting them the education they were looking for, by dealing with the people that were stressed because they couldn't buy those Christmas presents for their kids, by getting the various service providers into the communities so that we could provide them with the support that they need, the seeds started growing. The seed that my mother had laid into me started growing from that point and I was starting to identify with where my calling was going.

Further opportunities came through my friend, my colleague and my prior employer, Carol Hughes, who's the federal member for Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapus-kasing. Again, I had an opportunity to be part of her team—and what a team we had. It was the best thing that you can actually do when you see someone do something and get an action by listening. It was a commitment and it was actually a benefit to the entire region, and it is one of the greatest reasons why I have the honour and the privilege of standing here representing the people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I want to talk to you a little bit about Algoma-Manitoulin. It's a huge riding. It covers a vast area from Killarney all the way into Manitouwadge. Let me start in the northern region of Algoma-Manitoulin, where you have communities such as Manitouwadge, Hornepayne, White River, Dubreuilville, Wawa, Chapleau. Do you know what all of these communities have in common? Every single one of them has a good forestry-based industry there.

Interjection: Used to.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Hold on; I'm getting to that.

Unfortunately, the other thing they have in common is that they have closed mills, they have closed businesses, they have empty homes, they have empty streets, and they have empty schools because the kids have moved on. The list goes on, but we won't go into that many details.

However, the nice thing about the region and the best thing about that region is that you have a group of mayors and community activists who are determined that they will not go quietly and that they will not quit. That is not an option to them. "No" is not an option; "no" is not

an answer to them. And you know what? It's something that I've carried here, in my role, to Queen's Park: "No" is not an option.

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I firmly believe that there are a lot of things we can bring, not only to Algoma-Manitoulin but to Ontario. I firmly believe that, and we have that opportunity. It's there. We've just got to grasp it.

The next region I want to talk about covers from Batchawana Bay to Prince, Goulais, Echo Bay, Bruce Mines, Desbarats, Wharncliffe, Thessalon—hold on; I'm not done. Let's go down to Iron Bridge, Blind River, North Shore, Huron Shores, all the way across to Nairn Centre. These, again, are wonderful communities with local businesses and health care systems that are very much in the tourism aspect of things. A lot of the communities here migrate and go into the larger centres, which at one end is Sudbury and at the other is Sault Ste. Marie. But a lot of them want to stay home. With the extra schedules in the mining sector and the long work hours, the different schedules—seven in, seven off—they have that ability to stay home. Also, within this area, I have a very strong farming and agricultural sector.

The major community in my riding is Elliot Lake. Elliot Lake has a very large senior population. About 36% of them are above the age of 65: the perfect pilot project for a health care system, if we look at this community. I'll tell you why: It's because this is actually a community that many communities in Ontario will be about 10 to 15 years from now. But we have this one in our lap right now where we can implement a good pilot project on how we're going to address the crisis in our health care system going forward. Let's not forget that.

The journey continues, and I'm going to head into Espanola, where a strong paper mill is the major employer. Then, I've got my two gems: St. Joe's Island and Manitoulin Island, two of the most scenic areas in the province, if not in this country. I invite everybody to go to cherish and visit these areas. They are the best. You feel so welcome there. You are accepted as one of their own. On St. Joe's Island, they're going to be celebrating their bicentennial of the War of 1812 at Fort St. Joseph. It's going to be a very monumental thing, and the island will be in full bloom. So I invite you all. And you will find no better powwow trails in the summer than on Manitoulin Island.

Now, I can't forget the diamond in the rough that is Killarney, which has—and I kid you not—the best fish fry restaurant, bar none, in Ontario. People fly in to there from the States. It is the best, and it is well worth your going to have a visit.

My journey goes on—and by the looks of it, Speaker, I'm going to run out of time. But since I'm a rookie—I'm almost done—you're not going to cut me off when I say thank you to my family.

Anyway, I really want to acknowledge the prior MPP from Algoma-Manitoulin, Mr. Mike Brown. He served as an MPP in this Legislature, and also as a Speaker. He did it for 24 years. I also want to acknowledge his con-

stituency staff, whom I personally developed a working relationship with. Both Tom Farquhar and Sherrie Perron are exceptional people and dedicated to the job they did for the constituents of Algoma–Manitoulin. I look forward to building on the friendship we have developed.

I'm going to be missing a few things here, and it's unfortunate, but I would be very disappointed if I didn't thank my family.

To my boys, Roch and Matthieu: Thank you, mes boys. Dad s'en vient. Je vais être là pour vous-autres bientôt. I know we missed hunting season this year, but I'll make it up to you somehow, somewhere, some way. I promise you. Dad will be there when you need him.

To my wife, Pauline : Ma belle, je t'adore. Patient and ever-loving, you have given me everything and more. It's just too bad that you're not here with me in Toronto at times, at some of these ceremonies, some of these events. You deserve it as much as I do. I know you're here with me. The only reason why I'm here is because you're able to hold the fort back home.

Merci, Matthieu. Merci, Roch. Merci, Pauline. Je t'adore, Pauline. C'est tout, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for your presentation. Merci.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, I want to congratulate the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for his election to this assembly on behalf of the people of his community.

I really appreciated his speech. I really appreciated a journey through his beautiful riding, which I have not had the opportunity yet to visit, but I look forward to taking up his invitation and coming down.

I really appreciated his acknowledgement of the previous member from the riding, Mike Brown, who worked very, very hard in representing that community. We say thank you to Mike for his public service to this Legislature and to the people of Ontario.

I look forward, obviously, to the opportunity of working with the member from Algoma–Manitoulin on issues that are important to our communities across the province. The realities may differ slightly in a riding like mine, Ottawa Centre, which is a very urban, downtown community, from those of Algoma–Manitoulin. But I think, at the end of the day, the dreams and aspirations are the same: that we want to build a strong, prosperous province, where people have good-paying jobs and are able to enjoy a quality life.

I do want to bring it back a little bit to the Healthy Homes Renovations Tax Credit, the legislation, Bill 2, which is up for debate at this moment. I know that the member believes in helping our seniors. We really strongly feel and believe that this is a good measure to do so. This particular bill, this particular tax credit, is going to assist seniors so they can continue to live in their own home.

Every senior that I have spoken to, including my parents, and then those who live in my community, while meeting them at various events or when going to their homes, they tell me that they do not want to live in a

long-term-care facility; they want to live in their own home. They want assistance in ensuring that they can make adaptations to their homes that will help them continue to live in their own homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I would also like to congratulate the member for Algoma–Manitoulin for his election to this Legislature.

I also want to thank him for his maiden speech, obviously, and for some fatherly advice that is somewhat timely to myself, as Sarah and I will be expecting a new baby boy this coming February, so thank you for that.

I also want to commend you on your most recent private member's bill, that unfortunately was voted against in this chamber.

Back to Bill 2: I share some similar concerns about this bill. I believe this Liberal bill is out of touch with the realities faced by families and seniors in our province who struggle to make ends meet and who are oftentimes considering home renovations to be an unaffordable luxury.

Over the course of the election, I had the real opportunity to travel throughout my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, where I came across a retired gentleman, Bill, who lived up in Elmira, who told me, when coming to the door, he simply couldn't afford to live in his home.

Throughout the election, our leader, Tim Hudak, often described speaking to seniors who came to the door, shaking, with their hydro bill in their hands, telling us how afraid they were to open their hydro bill, being that they were afraid to see how much their next bill would be. Simply, seniors can't afford to live in their own homes, let alone have \$8,500 lying around to do frivolous renovations.

Just today, in fact, the Auditor General confirmed that the Liberal McGuinty policies are driving up hydro bills well beyond what was promised. In addition to that, Ontario seniors like Bill, the gentleman from Elmira, will be sad to hear the fact that \$1.8 billion was paid to New York and Quebec to take our excess energy.

We need to get our house in order. Unfortunately, the member's bill that failed in this House, about taking the HST off home heating, would have been the wiser direction to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to welcome the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. He is going to be a strong member of our caucus. He speaks very well in both languages, and he has been very effective already.

Just to correct the record, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga is a bit wrong. That bill did pass. Bill 4 passed second reading in this House, and it's now going on to committee and hopefully to level three, and then to royal assent, which will make it law. So it did pass, actually, thanks to co-operation from this side of the House.

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I'd just like to touch on all the accolades that are being thrown around by the other side about this Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. Well, Mr. Speaker, I did a little figuring out, a little number crunching, and they're saying if you spend \$10,000 on a renovation for your home, which most elderly people in this province cannot do—they'd be lucky if the bank would lend it to them to do it. And even if they could do it, they're forgetting one major thing: their little HST. If you borrow \$10,000 to do the renovation, and they're going to give you \$1,500 back, you're actually going to pay \$1,300 in tax on the \$10,000. So they're giving you a whopping \$200 credit, and you'll be lucky, up north, if that'll pay for your heating bill for one week.

So it's no break. It's another shell game that the Liberals are playing. It's another shell game: make it look like they're giving you a big credit when they're not. You're not going to benefit from this whatsoever. I wish they would be up front about their HST and how much it's going to cost the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I too want to congratulate the member for Algoma–Manitoulin on his victory and welcome him to the Legislature.

Because it was part of his maiden speech, I'm not going to dwell a whole lot of time on the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, but simply highlight a couple of things. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin made a couple of very, very salient points that I think we should all keep in mind. Yes, you'd better thank and love your wife every single, solitary day for the sacrifices that she and your two boys are going to make; certainly appreciate the incredible support you get from them on an ongoing basis because, as you stay in this place for any length of time, you realize just how important they are and just how much that encouragement helps you in doing your job.

I'm happy that you thanked Mike Brown and recognized his incredible work ethic. He was the member for Algoma–Manitoulin for a long time, Speaker, as you know, and he worked very, very hard. For you to recognize that shows a great deal of class on your part.

The member does come from one of the most beautiful parts of Ontario. I would dare say that Algoma–Manitoulin is an incredible tourist destination, not only because of its natural beauty but because of the beauty of its people as well.

I do want to welcome the member as my critic. We've already had some discussions with regard to northern development and mines. I look forward to those continuing and ongoing discussions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin can now reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to thank the members from Ottawa Centre, Kitchener–Conestoga, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for their comments. They were

well received. As a rookie, I forgot I had an extra two minutes, so I'm going to finish off my speech. Thank you very much.

You know, during the campaign, you see a lot of people, and you see a lot of each other as opponents. I also want to acknowledge Justin Tilson, David Hoffman and Joe Chapman, the mayor of Little Current. They continue to serve their communities. They were true gentlemen during the entire campaign. It was a privilege and an honour to share the stage with you during that time.

Now, my army was a big one. We had Team North, which was based in Wawa, where Marilynn Keddy, Andre Beddard, Luc Gagne, Sherry Gray, Stan and Noella Godin, Chantal Mantha, Alain and Brigitte Cyr, Melanie Groulx, George Evans and many, many others were there supporting me. And there was also my best friend—my best friend—Marc Beland, who is a teacher at Michipicoten High School. Go Vikings!

Team West in Echo Bay was led by Gregg Meehan, Bud and Jody Wildman, Glen Humphreys, Gerry Neaves, Howard Bowes and, again, many, many others.

Team Central—it's a huge riding; I wasn't kidding. In Elliot Lake you had Ann Robichaud, Craig McDowell, Sean Hill, Donna Reed, Carolyn Donaldson, my best friend Carol Hughes, Dawn Lalonde, Ted Smith and, again, many, many others that I know that I'm missing.

Now, you've got to bring them all together and you've got to have a quarterback or, should I say, a general behind the team, and that was Sharon Clark, who was my campaign manager. To you, Sharon, you became my second wife during the campaign, and I thank you immensely. You did what we were supposed to do. You kept me on track, and from the bottom of my heart, thank you, Sharon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to correct my record, that the private member's bill introduced by the member for Algoma–Manitoulin did in fact pass, of course, with the support of our caucus, the Ontario PC Party. Thank you.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. I've listened to the debate thus far, and while there are a lot of very general statements and musings about what the bill is about and what it does and what it doesn't do, there haven't been a lot of facts put on to the record, so what I intend to do is a few general comments and then I want to get into the nitty-gritty, the details of the bill, because I think it's important when we're debating these matters to know what is actually said and what isn't said.

We, as an Ontario government, are very keen to move forward with programs that do two things: one, address the needs of families, and in this particular case seniors; and at the same time strengthen the economy. If we can marry those two goals, that's good for Ontario.

The Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit would do a couple of things. It's going to help seniors stay in their homes longer. That's good for seniors, that's good for our long-term health care costs, and so on. It's going to help family members who are sharing a home with a senior, and there are many, many situations where the generations are living together. They can live comfortably and, indeed, happily and mutually supportive of each other. But in most cases, it does require some adjustments to the physical environment. This bill will address that.

This will benefit the taxpayers of Ontario by taking the pressure off the expensive costs of maintaining seniors in long-term home care facilities rather than allowing them to stay in their own homes or in the homes of their children. That's a saving to the Ontario taxpayer and it also is a good thing for Ontario families and their seniors.

This will provide about 10,500 jobs a year, the economists tell us. It will support about \$800 million in home renovation activity. That's good for our economy. That means jobs for renovators and contractors; that means companies are paying more taxes; that means the construction workers are paying more in taxes. That's good for all of us.

Now, if the bill passes, then, effective October 1, 2011—that's two months ago now—senior homeowners and tenants and people who share a home with a senior relative—and that's very important: people who share a home with a senior relative—would be allowed to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,500 for expenses related to permanent modifications. To continue to meet the fiscal targets, the cost of this program will be offset by savings in other areas.

There is some experience we can look to, to see how this program is likely to play out. If the take-up on our program in Ontario is similar to the federal 2009 home renovation tax credit, approximately up to 380,000 people could potentially benefit from this credit each year. That is a significant number: 380,000 people.

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Let me say something now about how you go about claiming the tax credit, because I think seniors and their families and others who are potentially likely to claim the tax credit would like to know that to claim the tax credit, seniors or their family members would have to do a couple of things.

One, they've got to get receipts from suppliers and contractors.

The credit would be calculated as 15% of up to \$10,000 in total eligible expenses for a senior's principal residence in Ontario for a calendar year, for a maximum of \$1,500 each year. That credit would be claimed on the personal income tax return.

Now, a lot of people say, "Well, what kind of renovation expenses would this cover?" I've had a lot of calls in the constituency office saying, "Can I do this? Can I do that? Would it cover this? Would it cover that?" and so on. So let me go through a number of examples, and the

viewers and members of this Legislature, when I go through the sample list, will get a clear sense of just what we mean by "renovation"; that is, what is eligible.

Here are some examples, but not a comprehensive list: certain renovations to permit first-floor occupancy or secondary suites, something that we know colloquially as granny suites or in-law suites; grab bars and related reinforcements around the toilet, bathtub and shower; handrails in corridors; wheelchair ramps; stair and wheelchair lifts and elevators—those are the things you see advertised on the television if you have problems with your hips and arthritis and walking, a kind of lift that goes up the side of the stairwell—bath lifts; walk-in bathtubs; wheel-in showers; widening passage doors in the home; lowering existing counters and cupboards or installing adjustable counters or cupboards; light switches and electrical outlets placed in accessible locations; door locks that are easy to operate; lever handles on doors and taps instead of the twist knobs. I can tell you, that was a particular problem for my own mother, who had some difficulties with arthritis in her hands. She had a terrible time turning the taps. She would be very happy to see this particular item.

Pull-out shelves under the counter to enable work from a seated position: Think of all of the seniors in wheelchairs who have their cupboards and they can't stand and they can't reach up.

Non-slip bathroom flooring: That sounds like a relatively innocuous thing, but when you talk to your own families and talk to your friends and talk to your relatives and talk to your neighbours, what's the thing that you most often hear about? You hear about someone's mother, someone's grandmother, someone's elderly sibling, sister or brother, and they've slipped in the shower. They've broken their hip; they've broken their arm. They are now in the hospital. The hip hasn't repaired, and they can't come back home. They're now looking for long-term care.

Just imagine if we can save a thousand or a couple of hundred people, whatever number of people, from falling in the bathroom and breaking their hips, keeping them at home rather than sending them off to long-term care. Think of what that means to them as an individual. They can stay in the home they've lived in for years and years and years. They can stay out of long-term care. That's good for them. That's a saving for the taxpayer. I dwell on that because think that's probably the simplest and most understandable example.

A hand-held shower on an adjustable rod or high-low mounting brackets for adjustable showers; additional light fixtures throughout the home and exterior entrances. How many times have you heard about the senior, somebody who took a fall on the steps? They were out picking up the newspaper or they were out trying to put out the garbage, and they slipped because of bad lighting and so on.

Swing-clear hinges on doors to widen doorways; creation of knee space under the basin to enable use from a seated position; insulation of hot water pipes; relocation

of tap to front or side of the sink for easier access; hands-free taps, again for arthritic hands; motion-activated lighting. I had a situation of a constituent who was out last year—it was after 6 o'clock in the evening, so there was early darkness. They were struggling to find the light switch to turn on the porch light, and they fell and broke their hip. They're still in a long-term-care home.

If the light switch had been motion-activated, that accident may not have happened. That's a simple matter. We're providing financial support to cover that. Again, I come back to it the third or fourth time: That's good for their quality of lifestyle; that's good for their peace of mind and their family's peace of mind; it's good for the Ontario taxpayer.

Touch-and-release drawers and cupboards, and drawers that pull out fully; modular or removable versions of a permanent fixture, such as modular ramps and non-fixed bath lifts—those are some of the examples.

I think, when you reflect on some of the examples that I've given, you get a very clear picture of the very practical efficacy of this legislation.

The detailed rules about the eligibility—I've just given maybe 15 or 20 examples—the specific rules for the eligibility will be set out in the legislation. The list that I've gone through is not in any way complete. However, it's subject to this limitation: Expenses would not be eligible if the primary purpose is really that someone is trying to increase the value of their home. That might be, for example, repairs to a roof; redecorating; a new window set or flooring or landscaping; heating and air conditioning, that sort of stuff. The renovations that you get the tax credit for have got to be specific to the lifestyle needs of the senior, of the applicant.

Let me give you perhaps two practical working examples, because I really think that it's important for our listeners to understand the details and the mechanics of this, rather than just hear a debate going on about whether it should be HST or it shouldn't be HST and the very general comments that we've heard in the debate thus far.

I'll take the hypothetical couple of Sally and Joe. They're a retired couple; they're in their late 60s. They own a home in Willowdale, I'll say, because that's my riding.

Joe's difficulty in getting up the stairs has meant that the couple had to install a stairlift so Joe can access the second storey of the house. Sally and Joe have paid a contractor \$6,000 for the purchase and installation of the stairlift. They would keep their receipt, they would claim \$6,000 on their 2012 tax return and they'd get a direct tax credit of \$900.

Let me give you a second example. This is an example of an Ontario citizen who is living with a parent. Anita lives with her 75-year-old mother in a rented apartment in—I'll take your riding, Thunder Bay, over there. Anita paid \$500 to have grab bars permanently installed in her bathroom to make it safer for her mother to get in and out of the bath. That's a common situation that I'm sure all members with aging parents are familiar with. Anita

would keep her receipt and she'd claim \$500 on her 2012 tax return for a direct tax credit of \$75.

For the 2012 tax year only, the \$10,000 maximum would apply to expenses paid or payable from October 1, 2011, to December 31, 2012.

I hope members are getting a sense from some of my—they may seem to be pedestrian comments, but again, I think it's important to understand what the legislation actually does, what it actually covers and so on.

The Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit is going to help seniors to stay healthy. It's going to help them to live with dignity and independence in the comfort of their homes for as long as possible.

I hear from many seniors, in my experiences in Willowdale and my experience with my own family: "If only I could have had bathroom railings installed, if only I could have had a lift ramp, I could have stayed there longer."

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It costs taxpayers more to provide care in long-term-care homes than to a senior who lives in his or her own home or lives with a family member, typically one of their children.

The proposed tax credit is projected—because I have had questions about this: What's the total cost of this program?—to cost in the order of \$60 million for 2011-12. This would be funded—because the other part of the question is: Where is the money going to come from?—by lowering spending on existing business support programs in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, as well as lower-than-forecast costs for a number of tax-related expenditures in the Ministry of Revenue. These savings will fully offset the cost of the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit.

Let me just say now a few words about other things that we're doing to support seniors, because the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit is really only a part of the whole; it's a part of the gestalt. We have been working over the years on a number of initiatives to ensure that Ontario seniors enjoy the highest standard of living by providing the best possible health care and support in other ways that will support their lifestyles, so that they can maintain a healthy lifestyle and they don't have to find themselves in need of these more dramatic things, like moving into a long-term-care home before it's really necessary.

Here are some things that we've done since 2003. I was elected to this Legislature in 2003. Before that I had done a lot of work with seniors' issues; I had done a lot of work on Alzheimer's issues and other things. One of the things that attracted me to the party was its sensitivity, awareness and commitment to issues that would make the lives of seniors easier, happier and more rewarding. That's why, for instance, one of the things I'm most proud of is proposing and getting through this Legislature, on an all-party basis, the first Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario, which has now been hooked

up and runs parallel to the United Nations Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

But we've done a number of things, and I just want to get some of them on the record here. We've done a number of enhancements to the Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors; that, in itself, is providing tax relief to about 740,000 seniors. They're eligible for \$1,025 annually. So we add that on to the healthy homes tax credit—you see where we're going.

Personal income tax cuts: On average, 93% of income taxpayers are getting a tax cut and are now saving about \$200 a year. In fact, 90,000 Ontarians are no longer paying any provincial income tax, and a great proportion of that number are seniors.

We have the Ontario Sales Tax Credit, which provides an annual payment of about \$260 for every senior, in addition to the existing GST tax credits.

Something my friends opposite should be very happy about are the Seniors in the North Initiative: Northern residents who pay rent or property taxes for their principal residence are eligible for a tax credit up to \$130 for a single person, \$200 for a family.

We have the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax credit: Eligible seniors continue to receive additional assistance with their property taxes through the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax credit. We started that in 2009; the maximum grant was doubled to \$500 in 2010. We announced that in the 2008 budget. Our government is providing about \$1 billion over the next five years through this grant to more than 600,000 seniors from low and middle incomes who own their own homes.

Increasing access to locked-in accounts: That's on the reforms that we've introduced to the rules for locked-in accounts so that seniors and other Ontarians can access those funds in their needier years. We increased unlocking from the Ontario life income fund to 50%, up from 25%, in 2010. We provided a two-year waiver of fees for financial hardship unlocking applications. That was effective back in April 2009. We've done work in generic drugs. We've done work in pension and retirement income security for seniors. We've done work in improving home care services, great initiatives in retirement homes. We have the Aging at Home strategy, which we announced in 2007. That's a four-year, \$1.1-billion strategy. That sort of dovetails and fits in with the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. We've done tremendous initiatives in long-term-care homes. Elder abuse I have mentioned.

I say all of these things in addition to my detailed comments on the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit because this is a government that is committed to the welfare of seniors. They did so much for this province when they were in their prime years that we as legislators owe it to them, we as a government owe it to them and we as citizens of Ontario owe it to them.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I thank the member for Willowdale for his comments.

Questions and comments? I'll turn to the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My friend over there—and he is my friend. I kid around a fair amount, but I've got to tell you, the member from Willowdale, as one senior speaking to another, and we've heard about age today, Kool-Aid is not that good to drink after you're 65, and you've taken an awful lot of it, number one. Number two, much has been made today of my age. You're older than me and you should know better.

I do agree with you on the last parts of your comments, that the seniors of our province are the people who really built the province, who gave us the prosperity that, frankly, is being eaten away now. They deserve better than a bill that slices and dices to get down to the point where it benefits almost nobody. I find the numbers that obviously have been provided to you by your research people, which say that maybe 380,000 seniors would take advantage of a credit like the healthy homes tax credit—I respectfully disagree with that. There are 1.8 million seniors in total, people above 65, in the province of Ontario now. They're divided into rich, middle-class and poor. The rich people are going to do what they want to do regardless of whether you give them a credit or not. The poorer people can't afford \$10,000 or any portion of that. The middle people are then parsed into the folks who require some kind of help and who don't require some kind of help because there are so many caveats on this thing about who qualifies and who doesn't qualify.

Last but not least, I want to bring forward a point. If you spent the whole \$10,000 on something—it doesn't matter what—you'd be paying HST, of which \$800 would be your provincial portion. When you give back the \$1,500 in the credit, you're actually only giving back \$700 net. So the government should not be pulling the wool over people's eyes by that kind of debate and by this kind of a tax credit, and should take into consideration what could have been accomplished with much broader-based credits, like electricity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Willowdale for his submission. However, there are a few holes in it, like Swiss cheese.

He says that they're going to allow \$1,500 for \$10,000 worth of work. Hmm, let's take a look at this. HST: There is no mention of that in there. There's HST on parts and supplies, for starters. Then we're going to pay HST on the services provided by the tradespeople to install it. If it amounts to \$1,500, just the HST alone on parts and, I think, on services will exceed \$1,300 by far by the time you pay for all the different contractors to come in, depending on what value you can get, so you've actually saved nothing.

Once again, our Liberal friends are playing the shell game. Then, if we don't vote for it, they're going to say, "Oh, you don't want to help the seniors of Ontario." But I really would like to help them. And if you really want to

help them, member from Willowdale, I would suggest that you take the HST off of parts and supplies to do the jobs and you take the HST off the tradespeople who are doing the job for seniors.

We have seniors in this province who are living in tents in 30-below, 40-below weather. I don't think they're going to have to worry about assistive devices to get into the bathroom or out. All they need is to open the tent flap, and it might be a little chilly. Really, I think this benefit is going to benefit very, very few people in this province. I don't know too many seniors in our province on fixed incomes who can throw around \$10,000, and they'd be lucky, Speaker, if the bank will even lend it to them in the first place.

Once again, here we go with another fluff bill. Thank you.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly gives me a great deal of pleasure to make a few comments on the eloquent presentation by the member for Willowdale. We apparently all listened to his remarks, but clearly I come at what he said in a very different way from the members of the two opposition parties. He put Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, in the context of all that our government has been doing since 2003. It's yet another step forward.

I had the opportunity this last Saturday to attend the Oak Ridges Lions Club seniors' luncheon. This is a tradition. It's something that happens every Christmas, and it's a wonderful opportunity to get to talk to many seniors in my riding. Of course, I mentioned to many of them that this bill was before the House. We were hoping for all-party support because, clearly, we felt it would be of great use to them. The types of remarks I got in return really led me to feel that this was certainly something very worthwhile to do.

Many of the seniors who live in Oak Ridges purchased their homes some 40 years ago. This is a place where the lots are quite a bit larger than in our newer subdivisions, and many of these seniors have enjoyed their gardens over the last 40 years. This is home for them. It is extremely important that they have the ability to stay there as long as possible.

When we look at what this does—there has been some talk that people cannot afford \$10,000. Well, it's 15% of whatever you make as an investment that helps you stay at home, and that helps people. It's as simple as that.

I heard from my constituents that this was a good step forward. I urge everyone to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Willowdale.

I know the member from Thornhill, when he gave his comments, talked about all the caveats on being able to participate in this bill. One was mentioned by the mem-

ber from Willowdale, and that is that you can't increase the value of your home. I would simply ask—and perhaps he can respond—what's wrong with increasing the value of your home? Why have you made that a reason for not qualifying for this bill?

The member from Willowdale also talked about job creation. We hear the government talking about numbers quite often. He said that 10,000 jobs would be created. Well, we see from the Auditor General's report today that in another well-publicized job claim they made, and that was to do with the Green Energy Act, they talked about 50,000 jobs with the Green Energy Act. The problem is, as the Auditor General reports today, 30,000 of those possible 50,000 highly subsidized jobs are short-term construction jobs that will last one to three years, and then they're gone. And for each job created, because of the high energy policies of this government, we actually lose two to four jobs. So we're going backwards.

The problem with this bill is, it's going to benefit very few seniors. You have to spend \$10,000 to get \$1,500 as a tax credit. Most seniors living in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka on a fixed income simply can't afford that \$10,000. They can't afford to pay their hydro bill these days, which is why it makes much more sense to provide HST relief off of heating and home heating and electricity bills, as so many of them would like to see. And as was pointed out by the member from Thornhill, when you add the HST on to the \$10,000, you actually only get a \$700 benefit from this proposed bill that would benefit very few seniors in the province of Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Willowdale, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to touch on some of the other tax credits, because the opposition parties have been going on about the HST.

Here are some things that we've done specifically for seniors. We provided tax relief for 740,000 seniors to help them with their energy costs. As I said earlier, that's \$1,025 a year.

On average, 93% of taxpayers are saving \$200 annually, and 90,000 Ontarians aren't paying any tax at all. A goodly portion of those are seniors.

The Ontario Sales Tax Credit, a permanent sales tax credit, is an annual payment of up to \$260 for every senior in Ontario.

The Seniors in the North—I touched on that. Northern residents who pay property taxes are eligible for a credit: \$130 for a single, \$200 for a family.

The Ontario senior homeowners' property tax credit: \$500 a year. That's about \$1 billion. That covers 600,000 Ontario seniors.

We've invested \$540 million under affordable housing, and a portion of that, in the amount of \$307 million, is dedicated specifically to funding rental units for low-income seniors.

The generic drugs initiative is a huge benefit for seniors. We reformed Ontario's drug delivery system; we've got lower generic drug prices. That benefits all Ontarians, of course, but it particularly benefits seniors, who, more than the younger population, are using various drug plans. It's a huge saving to them.

When we look at all those things over the last eight years of our government, this is a government that is truly a friend of Ontario seniors. It's reflected in our legislation, it's reflected in our policy and it's reflected in the attitude of the Liberal members of this chamber.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 2. It's titled the "proposed home renovation tax credit for seniors." The government has coined it the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit.

The bill, on the surface at least, is designed to assist seniors to upgrade their homes for access and mobility. I say "on the surface" as, in typical McGuinty government fashion, the bill looks good from afar, but once you get a little closer, I regret to report, this legislation is far from good.

I might add that this obviously was not part of our election platform. We in this room have collectively knocked on thousands and thousands of doors. I can report that it didn't come up at the door, and I personally have knocked on several thousand doors—I accelerated my door-knocking, I guess it would be, to last April or May. People didn't send me back here to prop up the McGuinty platform, either.

Few would deny supporting initiatives providing our senior population—1.8 million strong, as has been pointed out—with some benefits and providing them with "healthy homes." But again, the name of the legislation really doesn't indicate what kind of results we're going to see from this. We're going to have to wait a few years for that. Perhaps there will be an evaluation; perhaps there will be a report from the office of the Auditor General. We've all received our report for 2011 this afternoon.

If there is one thing that the members opposite are good at—and in particular, we're seeing this now in a minority situation—it's what we refer to down my way as show and sham. Tell people what they want to hear, get the credit, get those headlines, get the report on the 6 o'clock news, and then hope that everybody forgets what really occurs down the road: what results or lack of results, or perhaps results, albeit lacklustre results, come forward. It has worked in the last two elections; I've personally witnessed this.

I know my NDP colleague next door here uses the term "shell game." I sincerely hope this is not a shell game, but when you start factoring in the real cost, when you start factoring in HST that one pays on renovations—on lumber, supplies, tile, door handles, grip handles in showers and the cost of labour and renovation—it essentially comes out as a wash. I concur with that shell game label.

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So, 1.8 million seniors in the province; theoretically 1.8 million people believing they're going to get some help from this government to make their homes more accessible, when many of them—most of them, as we've heard just this afternoon—won't qualify financially for the \$1,500 maximum credit in the first place. I think the McGuinty government would count on this. There's no way, obviously, 1.8 million seniors are going to get the \$1,500 credit; 1.8 million people aren't going to spend \$10,000; they won't qualify. Heaven forbid if they did. I mean, we're looking at a debt now that's heading towards \$250 billion. We're looking at a debt that's going to be approaching \$300 billion by the time this government balances the books, if they were able to balance the books at their projected target.

So a senior would have to spend up to \$10,000 to qualify for the 15% credit, ever bearing in mind they're paying HST on this. It's \$10,000 up front, as I understand. There's no grant—I think there are grants available in Quebec—and you pay HST on this. This is sounding less and less optimistic as we go along.

Poorer seniors, low-income seniors, will be no more readily able to pay \$8,500 of the \$10,000 to get this kind of a rebate. So, as has been pointed out, it helps a very small group, perhaps that group somewhere between the rich and the poor. I don't know whether the well-heeled are necessarily interested in going for these kinds of government grants anyway.

Our finance critic recently pointed out that the median income for these 1.8 million seniors in Ontario is something like \$25,000 a year; \$45,000 for a couple. How can you pay \$10,000 when you have a \$25,000 median income? So in actuality, this government is putting a \$1,500 credit out there for renovations if seniors are willing to front nearly half their annual income. That doesn't make sense, Speaker. I do know that these seniors, with a \$25,000-a-year income, are out there, Speaker, as with you, I would assume.

We met so many people at the door on fixed incomes. Invariably, when they see you show up as their elected representative, oftentimes during discussion they indicate, "I'm on fixed income. I'm having trouble paying the bills. I'm having trouble paying taxes." I heard this over and over again. We had a platform, we had some things to tell them about taking the HST off the cost of electricity and home heating, getting rid of the debt retirement charge, and I can attest that this was very well received at the door. Nobody asked me about a home renovation tax credit from this Liberal government.

So we're asking, in many cases, our most vulnerable to consider jumping through a \$10,000 hoop in order to access a largely inaccessible tax credit. The bottom line is that this credit will not help seniors on fixed incomes, in my opinion, when it encompasses half of their fixed income. I'd just suggest: Do the arithmetic on that one.

These people need help paying the bills. These people need help with taxes. I don't want to speak for others or the NDP next door, but I would think that most of us here

would be interested in helping those who need the tax credit most, not a very small percentage like a focused program like this. We need a more general universal-type program. I would vote for something like that, and I have a platform that backs that up.

I'm not the only one here that's noted the shell game, the excess of smoke and well-placed mirrors in the announcement of this initiative. People are beginning to catch on to this government's well-worn track record of promising big and delivering little.

There has been some media on this—somewhat favourable media, I will suggest. There was an article in the Toronto Sun. What's interesting is, when you read these articles in the Sun or the Star, it's always kind of neat to go down to the comment section to get the other side of the story.

There was a comment from Bridgette with respect to a Sun article, and she starts off: "Are you kidding me ... seriously think about this: seniors are struggling to pay their hydro bills along with all the other costs thrown at them by our selfish Liberal government (adding HST to most food products, gasoline etc., etc.) and they have the audacity to think seniors are going to have some hidden money to do renos by more than likely a fraudulent contractor." And she ends by saying, "Who thinks up this stuff?"

So this is a tax bill; it's a finance bill. H&R Block has a tax-talk briefing that comes out to keep people up to date, and I'll just quote in part from some of this: "The credit would be refundable, unlike the former federal Home Renovation Tax Credit, which was non-refundable. This means the credit could create a refund even if you have not paid tax during the year." Now that's a positive because, again, at the door, I meet so many people, so many seniors, and they're in an economic position where they basically don't pay taxes.

"And the government proposes to make this a permanent credit, rather than a limited time offer." We'll see on that. We know things change over time.

"No more than \$10,000 may be claimed per house, although you may be able to claim it across multiple years, as long as the maximum total is not exceeded. The credit rate is 15%," as we know, "so the maximum credit is \$1,500."

Some of the expenses:

"—renovations that create granny flats or in-law suites;

"—grab bars and other reinforcements in a bathroom"—I'm not sure how you could spend \$10,000 on grab bars;

"—bath lifts, walk-in bathtubs and wheel-in showers"—these are a little more expensive items;

"—widening of doors"—that can be very expensive;

"—lowering existing counters and cupboards;

"—lever handles on doors, rather than knobs;

"—non-slip bathroom flooring;

"—a handheld shower on an adjustable rod." Obviously, you could buy an awful lot of those for \$10,000.

It goes on to say, "Seniors who are tenants or homeowners can claim the credit. If the work is paid for by a relative or someone else outside the home, the senior living in the residence can still make the claim. Non-seniors can also make a claim if they have a senior living with them." So I sincerely hope that kind of flexibility is there in the program, and if this goes for hearings we'll hear some more details about this.

Here are some more of the comments that I've been reading coming in from the media. Now, I'm not sure who submitted this one, but a quote: "This is to be a senior-only program. Not that many low-income seniors who are just making ends meet and still in their own homes are going to spend \$10,000 or \$20,000 on renovating their bathrooms so they can get a \$1,000 or \$1,500 tax credit. The seniors that can afford to spend tens of thousands of dollars on wheelchair ramps, special tubs, shower equipment etc. would likely do it anyway. Taking the HST off home heating would save seniors more money than this one-time tax credit." Again, a 15% tax credit; compare that to 13% of HST.

There was some feedback from someone named Norm—I'm assuming it was not Norm Miller or Norm Sterling, but Norm goes on to say: "I will be getting a heating bill, but I can't afford to have renovations done. So quick thinking here, if I could average \$100 savings on my heat," that would put \$100 back into the economy.

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He goes on to say, "If you have a Liberal MPP, encourage them to vote for the opposition-sponsored bill to remove HST from home heating cost."

Here's some feedback from Margaret. "I am also a senior who cannot afford home renovations, as my pensions do not increase"—and again, time and time again, I heard that at the door, Speaker: the fixed-income lament. "My pensions do not increase, but my heating, hydro, taxes and insurance do. I will probably have to sell my home and move to some dinky apartment, and all because of taxes and increases."

So as you may come to realize, Speaker, this proposal for seniors is going over somewhat like a lead balloon, certainly on this side of the House or this portion of the House. We presented, in a fair amount of detail, a plan for seniors. As many will know, we focused on creating 5,000 long-term-care beds and renovating 35,000 beds over the next 10 years; doubling the caregiver tax credit for those who care for an elderly family member; increasing investments in home care; and giving seniors more control over those kinds of home care services—the options, you know: to stay with their current provider or pick another government-funded home care provider that might better serve their needs—and, if I can repeat, taking the HST off electricity and home heating fuel and getting rid of that debt retirement charge on the electricity.

Again, having talked to so many people, so many seniors, those kinds of proposals really fell on fertile ground.

One thing I wish to note that came up in question period this morning: As of January 1, 2012, all busi-

nesses will be subject—will be mandatorily required, actually—to meet the Integrated Accessibility Standards, the regulation that's under the AODA, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. There was a Liberal question to a Liberal cabinet minister this morning about that. I know that's passing strange, but the question was—and I'll just go to the question. The Liberal member asked the cabinet minister what this is going to cost: "What assurances can be made about the costs of these standards to the businesses?" There was an opportunity to announce some help. The answer we got from the minister: "Many of the standards have no costs associated with them."

Again, there is concern on Main Street with Main Street businesses: What is this going to cost them? For example, when you start thinking about wheelchair ramps, those can be very, very expensive, especially when I think of small-town Main Street businesses, many of them in older buildings, and you have to climb these steps.

I have a few minutes left, Speaker. I do wish to make reference to the report we've all received today, the 2011 report of the Auditor General. Comsoc, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, warranted a chapter: chapter 3. Again, Comsoc funds a variety of supportive programs for people with disabilities: people are encouraged to live at home, to work in their communities and to participate in their communities. The report points out that—I think this is important—"Transfer payments for supportive services totalled approximately \$571 million in the 2010-11 fiscal year." This was "an increase of approximately 68% from ... 2000-01," for a total, at that time, of \$340 million. So, on average, during that time period, we saw an average annual increase of approximately 5% over that 10 years. I'm not sure if Don Drummond and Dalton McGuinty are going to put an end to those kinds of increases. From what I read, I think that's what we're going to see. I might point out that we favour a government worker salary freeze as opposed to any thoughts of taking the axe to services.

Now, of that \$570 million that Comsoc spent in the past fiscal year, it disbursed \$472 million or about 83% of the total to transfer payment agencies—well over 400 contracts—in particular to Special Services at Home, which serves about 24,000 families. Again, these are the kinds of services that are very important for people with disabilities, including seniors: assessment, counselling, speech and language therapy, respite care and behaviour intervention services.

To summarize—and I think I have a minute left—"Many of the concerns noted in our last audit"—that's from the Auditor General—"of this program 15 years ago have still not been satisfactorily addressed." As a result, "The ministry still does not have adequate assurance that its service delivery agencies are providing an appropriate and consistent level of support in a cost-effective manner to people with developmental disabilities." This is not good, Speaker. This has obviously been going on for 15 years, in particular over the last eight years. And as the

auditor reports, it will take several years before many of the issues we identify in this report can be effectively addressed. Again, this is not good. This report from the Auditor General is not good. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Recently, the government has proposed Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. At first glance, the bill sounds like it will help seniors. However, I think there's an opportunity for us to take this bill further.

I don't believe this bill considers the fact that the average senior is living on a nominal fixed income or meagre pension. They simply can't afford the \$10,000 out-of-pocket expense necessary to receive the proposed \$1,500 tax rebate. During the election campaign, many seniors identified skyrocketing property taxes as a chief factor influencing their ability and choice to stay in their family homes.

The Council on Aging of Ottawa affirmed that seniors are looking for affordable housing solutions, and asked our commitment to build more non-profit housing.

The proposed bill further ignores the large number of seniors living in rental accommodations throughout the province.

This proposed credit also applies to modifications done to a principal residence to support mobility and other measures. Over one full fiscal year, the proposed tax credit is expected to cost the treasury \$130 million, but lacks any real discussion on domestic content provision. Also, there are no provisions for either the construction materials or the medical assistance devices noted in the bill to be purchased in Ontario.

What help will this bill be to those Ontario seniors looking to us for meaningful solutions but who don't meet the eligibility requirements?

Additionally, introducing an unfair HST tax on home heating just compounds the issue of seniors' inability to afford to stay in their homes.

My colleagues and I want this bill to work for all seniors. We're not interested in another new program that doesn't significantly address the concerns that seniors are faced with every day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, seniors in western Mississauga are a pretty level-headed lot. As Ontario reformed our antiquated tax system to get Ontarians into the 21st century, our seniors liked being told not merely the truth, but all of the truth.

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Our seniors in neighbourhoods like Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville know that their income taxes went down permanently in January 2010. Our seniors know that the senior homeowners' and property tax credits pay all of the HST on some \$13,750 worth of bills for services that had not been taxed before 2010.

The clean energy benefit doesn't merely take off the 8% HST from your electricity bill; it takes off another

2% on top of that. So why go back, as the opposition would suggest, to merely taking off 8% when the status quo—the bill that already passed, the clean energy benefit—takes off 10%, not 8%? Why they want to raise the prices of electricity an extra 2%, I really don't know.

What seniors really do need to do is to stay in their homes as they age. As homeowners move through their 70s and into their 80s, they need to add things like ramps and lifts and other assistive devices to stay in their home, and that's what this tax credit focuses on. It's for people who would like to stay and to age in the home they've lived in for years, the home they brought up their children in—and it's actually the most economic place for seniors to age. What this tax credit aims to do is to assist seniors throughout Ontario to do the simple modifications to their home, to be able to stay in their home as they get older.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Toby, that was excellent, what you had to say there. I'm not sure what doors the Liberals were actually knocking on, but at the doors that we were knocking on, the people, the seniors, were absolutely devastated on fixed incomes, and they were literally deciding whether they were going to pay their HST or buy their food for the day, for the week. It was absolutely heart-wrenching and heartbreaking to watch them come to the door, struggling with their heat and hydro bills on their fixed incomes.

When you see right now that you're making them spend \$10,000 to get a \$1,500 rebate—when actually the GST is \$1,300, so they're only going to get \$200 of that—how sad.

I am here for the voice of Burlington, to let those people hear that we have ears for them, that we heard them when door-knocking, door to door. We need to be part of those people, because they are struggling. They have worked extremely hard for their lives while they were working, and they're seniors now and they deserve a break. They deserve to live, to not worry about paying their HST bill; to not worry that they need to have food on their plate but they can't do it because they can't afford their heat and hydro bill.

So I'm here today. I totally respect what Toby had to say. It's very, very difficult for seniors, and to expect them to come up now—we should be worrying about seniors and long-term-care beds more. They're waiting 173 days, 24,000 of them. We can't be selective on a few small amounts, for political reasons, to talk about something that they clearly are not going to benefit from.

I think it's a travesty for them that we are not listening to what they have to say. I'm here today with the PC caucus, respecting the seniors and constituents in our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In response to my colleague the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, he raised some very

interesting points and I'd like to expand on one of them in particular.

The proposed bill by the Liberal government requires that seniors—who, I agree, are on fixed incomes—have to jump through a lot of hoops. He used that phrase, and I want to expand on that.

Specifically, this tax credit applies to seniors who are over 65. It has to apply to devices which assist in mobility. One has to spend \$10,000 to get the \$1,500 rebate.

We're applying all of these conditions on seniors: people who are vulnerable, people in our society who are on fixed incomes. Contrast this with the corporate tax break for corporations. There are absolutely no strings attached. Why is it that we are applying so many strings, so many conditions on seniors? Why is it that seniors have to jump through so many hoops just to get their tax break but a corporation will get their tax break with absolutely no strings attached, with the simple hope that somehow this will translate into jobs for Ontarians?

Are we here just to hope that corporations will help us, or can we apply the same standards that we apply to vulnerable seniors? Can we apply those to corporations so that they are required to give us some guarantee that there will be a job created in Ontario, some guarantee that there will be a factory or machinery or equipment invested in?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What does Toby think about that?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The member from Haldimand–Norfolk raised this issue, that there are so many hoops that seniors have to jump through.

Let's apply a more lax approach to those who are vulnerable in our society, let's apply a more fair approach to those who are less fortunate and let's apply a more stringent standard to corporations, who are, of course, better off and who are more stable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: To my colleagues to the left here, London–Fanshawe and Bramalea–Gore–Malton: The NDP have some very constructive contributions to this debate. I think the term “shell game” has now been inculcated within our memory of this debate, and “jumping through hoops.”

It is difficult for individuals. I hate filling out forms and jumping through hoops. I'm not good at that at all. Very large companies, organizations like that, can hire people to do this for them. That really doesn't make for a very level playing field as far as individuals, in particular seniors who are trying to get a bit of a break from this government.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville: I do encourage the government: Keep trying. You may get this right eventually. We all agree: We do have to better enable people and seniors to stay in their own homes. We've also got to beef up home care, and don't forget

about long-term care. There's been very little on that file for the last eight years.

I do want to thank Jane, the member for Burlington. Again, many people, senior or not, don't have that \$10,000 to sink into their homes.

I think looking at the bigger picture, Speaker, this is a spending bill. I'm very concerned that this government is coming forward after the election with a solution to a situation—the future is going to be very, very difficult. We have a very big problem of borrowing and spending in this legislation. What I see the solution is: borrowing and spending. I'm concerned about that.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I will be sharing my time with the member from Davenport.

I am very honoured to stand here today and deliver my maiden speech in the Legislative Assembly. I am truly appreciative of the opportunity to introduce myself and the concerns facing the constituents of my riding of London–Fanshawe.

To begin, I want to congratulate all members on their election success, and I look forward to working collaboratively with all of you. By focusing on achievable change, I know we can get real results for the people of London–Fanshawe and the rest of Ontario.

Firstly, I want to thank the residents of London–Fanshawe for delivering a strong message on October 6. The message was one of change. They are tired of the status quo and the same old politics as usual. It is with great honour that I represent approximately 100,000 residents of London–Fanshawe, and I thank them for trusting me to be their voice in Queen's Park.

I would also like to thank my caring family. My husband, Bill, and I have been married for 22 years, and we share two lovely children, aged 21 and 19 years old. It is with their love and encouragement that I find the passion and determination necessary to take on this meaningful opportunity.

To Andrea Horwath, leader of Ontario's New Democrats: For your vision, passion and support, I sincerely thank you. Your genuine commitment to building a better Ontario by putting the focus back on the people of Ontario is inspiring. I am honoured to be a part of the amazing team we have assembled here today at Queen's Park.

Additionally, I want to thank everyone who worked on my campaign. To all the dedicated volunteers who gave up their time and shared their personal stories with me, I thank you for your hard work, dedication and trust. Together we achieved a huge success, and we connected with our community and each other on a meaningful and personal level. It was an experience I won't ever forget.

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I also would like to congratulate the member for Brant on his recent election as Speaker in the House. I know the Speaker will ensure that we conduct our business in a respectful manner. I hope all members here will pledge to

respect the duty and privilege of the office that we have been elected to.

Mr. Speaker, my parents emigrated to Canada from Portugal in 1968 with five young children. With very little English, my father was able to secure a job in construction while my mother stayed home to raise our family. My parents raised a total of six children, all of whom went on to get married. Now they have their own families, and they gave my parents 14 beautiful grandchildren.

Like most people, it was only as an adult that I developed a true appreciation for my parents, the obstacles they faced as newcomers and the tenacity they faced them with. The love and support my family showed me growing up made me the person that I am today, and I am so grateful to have them in my life.

As a young woman I was very independent. My family was very traditional and my four brothers and sisters were far more conservative than I was. I had a habit of shocking my family through unexpected ways. At age 16, I got my motorcycle while most other young girls were getting their car licences. At age 18, I became the first member of my family to get my Canadian citizenship. Shortly thereafter, I chose to pursue a post-secondary education away from home. Most of these actions left my parents speechless, but I was proud and determined to venture out on my own.

Not long after I completed my post-secondary education at Loyalist College, I reconnected with my loving husband and we were married. Once again, I turned heads in my family by choosing to marry outside of my culture, although my family welcomed my husband warmly. I will forever be in awe of my parents for giving me the freedom to take the risks and behave in ways that they did not fully understand.

When I look back on my personal experiences, I realize how grateful I am for my family and the many opportunities I had growing up. It gives me great pleasure to dedicate my work here in the House to all residents of London–Fanshawe to ensure they can afford and have access to the opportunities they need to develop as individuals, which will enable them to participate fully in our community.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents in southwestern Ontario are facing real issues of affordability. In London–Fanshawe, we have an unemployment rate of 9.2%, which is unacceptable. There is a real necessity for all of us here to take action by creating and protecting jobs for the long run. We must stop giving away across-the-board tax cuts to companies that are not compelled to create new jobs. I believe rewarding the job creators of this province is the right way to move forward, and I ask for all members here to support my efforts.

In London, we have emergency wards that are bursting at the seams and no real commitment to long-term-care beds. Additionally, we lost significant numbers of front-line workers in our health care system while hospital CEO salaries continued to go unchecked.

During the course of the election campaign, I had the pleasure of meeting many incredible people in my riding.

One of the many amazing people I met along the campaign trail was a woman named Marita. When Marita was undergoing treatment for breast cancer, she learned that many of the nurses who were caring for her were going to be laid off. While fighting her own battle with cancer, Marita took on a second battle: saving the nurses' jobs. Marita knew how hard the nurses worked and how much comfort they gave her. She was worried that the patients coming after her wouldn't get the same kind of care she did. While hard-working nurses were getting pink slips, the CEO of the hospital earned more than \$800,000, making him the highest-paid civil servants in London and one of the top earners in all of Ontario.

I am so grateful I had the opportunity to meet Marita, and I urge you to join her cause. Together, we have the ability to make real changes to our health care system. Our proposal to cap six-figure salaries of hospital CEOs would allow us to reinvest those savings and restore the losses of our front-line health care staff. It's clear that my constituents of London–Fanshawe are simply not confident that the health care system will be there for them when they need it.

It's time to return to a health care structure that works for all Ontarians. Ontario New Democrats won't give up on our public health care system, and I know it's an important priority for many Ontario families.

Lastly, Speaker, I want to highlight a shameful fact. Ontario has the highest tuition fees and the lowest per capita spending on post-secondary education in the country. Students saw tuitions rise more than 30% since the Liberals came to office. This is the same Liberal government that made an election promise in 2004 to the students of Ontario to freeze tuition fees. While this measure was initially welcomed by students and their families, the program was promptly rescinded after only one year.

During the most recent election, the Liberals proposed a 30% tuition rebate for only a portion of post-secondary students, and once again I believe they are missing the mark. Students across this province are demanding that we commit to long-term solutions. We must immediately address the dual problems of skyrocketing tuition fees and student debt. This government cannot honestly expect to offer a program only to half of the eligible students while doing nothing to prevent tuition fees from rising exponentially.

We also think students need us to do more, and to eliminate the interest on the provincial portion of the student loan is a good start. My riding of London–Fanshawe is home to Fanshawe College, and just outside the riding is the University of Western Ontario. I am eager to provide the students of my riding and yours with the financial relief they so desperately need.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of the many challenges facing southwestern Ontario and my riding in particular, I am very pleased to acknowledge the positive efforts of many of the vibrant community organizations in London–Fanshawe. Our local business improvement association, along with the Dutch, Marconi, Islamic, Maltese and

Portuguese clubs, are just making a real difference in the lives of my constituents every day. There are so many more organizations, and I wish I could name them all today.

I do look forward to sharing the successes and the celebrations of my community with the members of this House throughout the year. It is clear that we have enormous challenges ahead of us: making life affordable, protecting and creating jobs, delivering a health care system that works, and investing in education, to name a few. I am confident that we can work together and achieve real results for the people of London–Fanshawe and the rest of Ontario, which they deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member indicated that she was going to share her time with the member for Davenport. I now turn to the member for Davenport and recognize him as well.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Congratulations to my colleague from London–Fanshawe on her first speech; very well done.

It's my privilege to be standing here today with my colleagues to represent the riding of Davenport. In the last few years, we've seen a growing movement of political engagement in my riding. We've seen new groups of young people, newcomers and seniors become more involved in our communities and involved in political organizing, some of them for the very first time.

Across the riding, individuals are looking for a place to connect. They want to be a part of the political process. Every day, I hear from constituents who are drawn to our message at the NDP because of our positive ideas about collective action and about the hopefulness when we work together. More and more people are stepping up to contribute to this movement in our riding, across the province and across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who supported me through this campaign. I'd like to thank the residents of Davenport for putting their trust in me. I promise that I'll ensure your voices are heard in this Legislature.

I'd also like to thank my campaign staff and the hundreds of volunteers who gave countless hours to our shared vision. I feel lucky to have met each of you, and I look forward to working with you in the years ahead.

Finally, I'd like to thank my closest friends and family. Our families and close friends are the people who sacrifice the most to make this all possible. Through my years of work as an educator and as a social worker, I've seen first-hand the impact that public policy has on the everyday life of people in this province. I've seen the great significance of having a good teacher or having a good social worker and the incredible, positive impact when people get access to good programs and services. But I've also seen when governments fail to deliver. I've seen what happens when we don't create good jobs, when we don't invest in affordable child care or housing, when we don't provide enough supports for social services. I've seen what this means for families who are

trapped in poverty, who live in substandard housing and who are dependent on food banks to make it through each month. I decided to run for public office because I know that we cannot allow government to shrink from its responsibility to Ontarians.

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I'm incredibly proud to represent the great riding of Davenport. We represent the best parts of this city and this province. The people of Davenport are scrappy. Through tough times, we never give up. We work hard every day and we're always proud of our communities.

People come from every corner of the world to Davenport. We're a diverse riding with a rich and emerging history, where people have built their homes and raised their families and contributed every day to this city and province. We work in construction, in the arts, as young professionals, and we work together to create some of the most vibrant communities in this province.

Davenport residents are committed to community engagement and to social action. We are lucky to have so many active groups in our riding, from the folks at Dufferin Grove Park to the Dovercourt Boys and Girls Club, to the many BIAs and groups that organize the BIG on Bloor Festival each year, to advocates like the Clean Train Coalition or my friends at The Stop Community Food Centre.

Constituents in Davenport are doing their very best to make our province better. We need government to do their part, to take action to make life more affordable and create good jobs in Ontario and to make sure that we have a green plan for economic growth.

Across this city, people are affected by gridlock. We all want to spend more time with our families and less time stuck in traffic or waiting for a bus. Even the Toronto Board of Trade estimates that we lose \$6 billion each year in productivity due to gridlock.

We badly need a plan to build and operate affordable public transit. We need leadership from this province and we need commitment to build public transit that serves this city. Instead, we hear increasing talk about privately funded transit, while TTC fares continue to go up and our services are cut.

We hear that there will be a new train to the airport, but instead of an affordable, green transit plan, the public will foot the bill to build a diesel train that will put the health of 300,000 Torontonians at risk. Instead of serving everyday people, this line will be affordable only to elite businessmen and bankers. We need this government to invest in green infrastructure and affordable public transit that serves everyone.

Young families in my riding are feeling particularly squeezed. Tuition fees, as my colleague mentioned, have skyrocketed under this government. Student debt and personal debt are at all-time highs. Parents of young families need affordable child care, and they need support to care for their aging parents as well. Life is increasingly precarious for many of our constituents. There is growing unemployment, and families are scrambling,

working multiple, often part-time jobs just to pay the bills.

I've heard clearly from families in Davenport that we must take action to support our seniors. Many of my constituents in Davenport are seniors who have given their lives to Ontario, who have worked hard, who have raised their families and contributed to our city and our neighbourhoods. And now many of them are left alone. Their children can no longer afford to live in our riding, and many are forced to move away to raise the next generation.

Seniors need respect from the provincial government. They need our help to make life more affordable. Seniors need pensions that pay the bills. They need the province to properly fund cities so that cities aren't forced to raise revenue from unfair property taxes that affect our senior citizens. It's simply not fair that corporations are receiving tax cuts while seniors on fixed incomes can't keep their heat on because they are forced to pay an unfair HST on home essentials.

We need to make sure that seniors get the home care and the long-term care they need so they can care for their spouses and they can stay in their homes. The government has proposed a home renovation tax credit for seniors to help them stay in their homes. We need to hear more about this and we need to look closely at the fine print. Will this program really provide seniors with the support that they so badly need, or is this just another feel-good promise that doesn't deliver? How many seniors will actually be able to access this program? How many seniors have \$10,000 to spend to renovate their home? Not many folks in my riding, I'll tell you.

People are sick of government speaking out of both sides of their mouth at once, whether it's talking about green jobs and then investing in dirty diesel trains, or expressing concerns for students after increasing tuition fees to record levels, or spending years on reports and reviews about poverty reduction while families struggle every day to pay the bills, or now this latest promise to help seniors after making life more expensive by insisting that they pay an unfair HST on their home essentials.

We need to make sure that the provincial government works for the people of Ontario and that we all work to make life more affordable for everyday Ontarians.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate my colleagues in this Legislature. Congratulations to all those re-elected. Although we may disagree on many things, I recognize and thank you for the sacrifice that all of you and your families make to public service in Ontario. To all the newly elected members of the Legislature, welcome to all of you. As the class of 2011, we have a lot of work to do and a lot to prove. And lastly, to my NDP team, thank you to our tireless leader Andrea Horwath. You are the right person for the job and it's an honour to work on your team.

To the veterans in my caucus: Thank you for your continuous support and encouragement.

To my staff and the caucus staff who work so hard every day here, who work such incredibly long hours

behind the scenes: We couldn't do this without you, so thank you.

To my new friends, the elected, the newly elected, the new New Democrats in caucus: I'm happy to know you, and I feel confident that we're up to the job.

These are very difficult times, but together we are a strong team with a powerful movement behind us. I wish all of us the very best of luck to work to deliver for the people of this province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kim Craiton: It is an honour to be able to speak after listening to my two colleagues give their maiden speech.

I was just thinking, as I was listening, it seems like it was only yesterday when I walked up those stairs called Parliament. I have to tell you, there isn't a day when I walk into this building, as frustrated as I get in here sometimes—and we all do—that I don't still get that feeling of how special it is to be able to walk into this place called Parliament. It's like a dream come true.

I want to just make some short comments. First of all, to my colleague from London–Fanshawe: The most important thing you said—I heard it so loud and clear—is that you ride a motorcycle. Well, so do I, so this summer I expect that we'll be out somewhere together, riding around Queen's Park on our bikes, and that will be called “working together.”

To my good friend from Davenport: A couple of things you said just jumped right out at me. You mentioned the words “boys and girls club,” and right away, you hit it home, because those are the kinds of things that all of us support, and it was nice to hear you say that. The BIA: I sat on a number of BIAs as a city councillor in Niagara Falls, so I know the importance of those as well.

Finally, I just want to talk really quickly on the home renovation tax credit. I will tell you that during the debates I had, that was probably one of the most-asked questions of me by seniors, whether it was at the Ridgeway seniors' centre, the Niagara Falls Coronation seniors' centre, or the St. Davids Lions Club, and there was a real interest in that.

This is a great idea. The details will come out, and so I have shared those details. I've gone back into my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, and I have told the people clearly, “This is what you're going to get out of it.” I haven't had anyone come back to me and say, “It's terrible. I don't want it.”

You always want it to be better, and I acknowledge that. You want to be able to give everybody everything. That's what we all want to do, and we'd be flat broke. We can't, so you pick what you can do the best with.

In my riding, people are asking me for this to go ahead. I have a list of people who are expecting me to call them back when this is passed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's really interesting this afternoon, as many new members have been giving their maiden speeches, just to hear from the member from London–Fanshawe and the member from Davenport. It's wonderful to see the passion and commitment that you're bringing to this place, and I'm sure that you're going to do wonderful things here. Congratulations, and all the best to both of you.

As we go forward, we are speaking about Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, which, of course, amends the Taxation Act, 2007.

I have to say, again, this is another disappointment. It's like so many of the bills that are being brought forward by this government: It's sort of half measures. Instead of really taking on the problem that we really need to deal with, we end with something that's so watered down and so diluted that it ends up with very little value.

It seems like it's really nothing much more than window dressing. Although it will help a few people, it's not taking on some of the really significant problems that we're faced with here in the province of Ontario, like the jobs crisis that we have here in the province.

We're now in the 59th straight month here in Ontario of having an unemployment rate that's higher than the national average. It's pretty shocking, considering that Ontario used to be the economic engine of Confederation. How far we've fallen.

We also have a major spending problem that this government really can't seem to get under control, which makes it all the more important, when we are doing some more spending, that we really target it and make it as broadly based as possible, to help as many people in the province of Ontario as we can.

There's no question that under this government, the plight of seniors has become worse and worse. There are a lot of people who are living in substandard housing conditions. Having this renovation tax credit is going to help a few people, yes, but how many people are really going to be able to afford \$10,000 in order to do the renovations for which they can get the 15% credit? So it's like we're trying to help a few people when we should be looking at spending the money as best we can and spreading it across to help as many Ontarians as we can, who are going through very difficult times right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to extend my congratulations to my colleagues from London–Fanshawe and from Davenport for their first speech, their maiden speech, in this illustrious building, and I congratulate them for their sentiments.

Beginning first with my colleague from London–Fanshawe, she spoke on something that struck a chord with me when she talked about tuition increases. It's very interesting to note that it's this very same government, which is responsible for eight years of governing and

seeing tuition fees increase 30%, that's now proposing a grant to address that 30% increase in tuition. It's important to note that over the past eight years students have been crying out, and I attended a number of protests where we asked for a freeze in tuition fees, because adding a grant is a stopgap measure; it's a temporary solution. If tuition fees continue to increase, there is no real solution by giving a grant. A real solution is freezing tuition fees like they've done in Newfoundland, like they've done in other jurisdictions.

Turning to my colleague from Davenport, I commend the commitment to green energy. It's the direction where we should be heading towards. But in 2011, the fact that there is a proposal on the table for diesel trains, for trains which will pollute our environment in a time when we're moving towards more advanced technology—it's shameful that that's our solution; that in a time of more technology, advancing technology, our solution for transportation is to invest in brand new old-technology diesel trains. It simply defies logic. In this time and age we need to move towards green energy, and that means green transportation for the people of Davenport and for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question and comment.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Before I begin my comments, I want to give a bit of a shout-out, if I can, Speaker, to John Ongaro back in Thunder Bay, at Magic 99.9 radio station. John's doing 34 consecutive hours, starting this morning at 6 o'clock, to raise the profile of the Christmas Cheer Fund in Thunder Bay. I had a chance to talk to John this morning before I flew down to Toronto. John, congratulations. Hopefully you helped the Christmas Cheer Fund meet their goal this year. They came up a little bit short last year.

This Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, of course, is a nice piece. I'm going to get to a few other examples in a minute, but just so that people know: 15% of up to \$10,000 in total eligible expenses; a maximum return of \$1,500 per year for seniors; a whole list of things here that are eligible, including handrails in corridors and wheelchair ramps. I was just at a constituent's home on Saturday morning, as a matter of fact, where they had to install a lift for this gentleman—for his wife. I'm sure they would have been very happy if they had been eligible for this program. Stairs, wheelchair lifts, elevators, bath lifts—the list goes on.

But this is, of course, not the only thing—far from it—that we've done for seniors since we've come to government: a property tax credit for seniors, allowing them up to \$1,025 annually; personal income tax cuts of 1% on the first \$37,000; a special energy credit for seniors in the north of up to \$200 for a family; an Ontario senior homeowner's property tax grant that we doubled, Speaker, for seniors—doubled up to \$500.

Speaker, I'll talk just briefly in the last 20 seconds of CEISS, the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services in Thunder Bay. We're building currently, right now, for seniors 132 new supportive housing units, as

well as a brand new long-term-care home, coming online soon: 350 to 450 new beds online starting next year.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To reply, I recognize again the member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: You know, it's one thing to stand and talk about all the good things that have happened over eight years, but you know, when we go and canvass and we talk to constituents, people are not happy, and that's why people overwhelmingly voted for change in the last election.

I strongly believe that if we are going to increase voter turnout, we need to talk to our communities about what we can do as government.

As New Democrats, we believe that government has a role to play, that we need to play a leadership role in this province. If we're going to reduce poverty, government has a role to play; if we are going to create jobs, government has a role to play; and if we're going to create a green economy, the government has a role to play.

With all due respect, the member for Niagara Falls said we can't have everything, and I'm paraphrasing. We hear that all the time, and our constituents constantly hear that. They hear that their parents, senior citizens who have given an entire lifetime to this province, cannot have what they need to live with dignity as they age. They hear that their children cannot have good-quality, affordable child care. Torontonians are hearing every day that we can't afford to even keep our bus lines going because we can't pay to operate them. What I think Ontarians want to hear is what we can do as government, not what we can't do.

But one thing we do hear we can afford over and over again is we can always afford corporate tax cuts. I think this is absolutely the wrong way to go. We need to make sure that we're using our money wisely and that we're using every penny of it, respectfully, to support people, whether they are vulnerable, whether they're young or old, to make sure that we have the very best province that we can here in Ontario. That's going to inspire voters, and that's what's most important here, I think. So thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 2?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 2. This is another item in our helping seniors aging at home. In 2007, the McGuinty government launched the \$1.1-billion Aging at Home strategy, and that was a new direction for seniors. We had enough people in the long-term-care homes, we had enough of them in the urgent care beds in hospitals, and so many seniors want to stay at home.

I was at an event with the chair of the LHIN, Alex Munter, some time ago. There were 600 or 700 seniors in the room in Ottawa. Alex asked them, "How many of you want to end your days in a retirement home or a long-term-care home?" Of course, there was not one person who put up their hand.

The strategy of Aging at Home is designed to provide support for seniors and their caregivers, to help seniors stay healthy and live with dignity in the comfort of their own home much longer, and, for many of them, until the end of their days.

Ontario has invested \$540 million under the affordable housing program extension, which includes \$307 million in funding for rental units for low-income seniors. So there are programs for low-income earners as well. This is in addition to the energy and property tax credits for seniors that were mentioned often during this debate.

Personal income tax cuts, an average of \$200 annually for Ontarians, came in, and so this is of benefit to everyone.

The Ontario permanent tax credit provides annual payment for every senior in addition to the existing GST credit.

The Ontario senior homeowner property tax grant was doubled in 2010 to \$500. More than 600,000 seniors with low to middle incomes who own their own homes will receive this grant.

In addition, on energy bills the clean energy benefit takes 10% off their electricity bills.

So there are many, many programs that are helpful to people with middle and low incomes.

We've heard that Bill 2 only impacts a few people, but that's not so. This is a program that is available for many people. Many people wouldn't have the \$10,000 or \$15,000 immediately, but if they're looking at a program of 10 or 15 years of staying in their own homes and there is a series of improvements they can do on their homes, then this 15% tax credit is going to be worth it.

On that 15% tax credit, they've been saying, "Well, that's about equivalent to the tax, the GST and HST that you're paying on these improvements, that you pay the plumbers or you pay the material suppliers." But the fact is, unless you were going to be doing this under the table, you're going to be paying those taxes. That's part of all costs you have in Ontario. I think you have to recognize it is a 15% reduction in your costs.

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As with all plans, not all owners would take advantage of the tax. Based on the federal 2009 homeowner renovation tax credit, this program will be very popular. I took advantage of that. That was for a new home heating system. It was a great program. It incited me to replace my roof a couple of years earlier, because the program was on, and I also got the benefits of a much more energy-efficient heating system. That was the federal program. This one is to incent improvements to your home so that, as a senior, you can stay there much longer.

This costs the taxpayer a lot less money, and that's what is important. The cost of seniors going into urgent care beds when caregiving collapses and the ambulance is called—what has happened historically is that we've got too many people in urgent care beds in hospitals and in long-term care. This is not the place where seniors should be, and there haven't been the incentives before

the last two or three or four years, when aging at home became a priority for our government.

This is going to keep people in their homes. It's going to make it a lot better for taxpayers. I think the cost of an urgent care bed is \$1,200, \$1,300, \$1,400 a day; I'm not sure what it is in long-term care. But certainly the costs at home are just a fraction of that. This is an important incentive that not all seniors, of course, will be looking to, but there will be enough seniors, and the projections that have been made show that this is going to be significant.

If we can get more people staying at home, aging at home, having the facilities in their own homes that make their lives much easier—and these are support services for their health as well as for mobility in their homes—this will come together with what we're already doing.

The choice they have to make—being in my 70s, I start thinking of that as well. What happens if you need that lift? What happens if you need that walk-in tub? What happens if you need those 20 or 30 items that have been mentioned? It's certainly going to be of interest that you're going to be able to do that; look at a long term, 10 years of staying in your own home and being able to put those dollars in. If it's \$10,000, that's a huge amount of money, but when you consider the alternatives—going to a retirement home or other facility—it certainly makes it a lot easier.

Seniors, as we said before, certainly want to stay in their homes; there's no question. We as a government have to bring in all these issues. This is just one. This is not a silver bullet that's going to revolutionize the aging-at-home thing, but it's going to be part of all the advances we've already made. It will complement many of the aging-at-home investments that we have made and we are making.

We know that the federal program was very successful, as I said before. So incenting these renovations by having that 15% tax credit will add to the number of seniors who decide to make those renovations in their home. That's what it is. It's an incentive. It's not for all people, but it is targeted for seniors, it is going to help them and it is going to add to that list of items we've undertaken over the last few years and which we're going to continue.

Alex Munter was the head of the LHIN in Ottawa, and at the time he had started to move people out of urgent care beds in hospitals into their homes, where they had support services, or even into others. So that is another area that is continuing, that can be successful and that certainly has made a lot of progress in the last few years. I know it's the right direction to go. So this is an add-on that will help a lot of seniors make that decision to proceed.

Often with seniors we do not have sufficient contact with the health care system. That's changing, but in many cases we know that it was the people caring for the individual, for the senior, that would break down. They would call 911—an ambulance—and the senior would end up in the hospital, and that's where the big costs

would start. If that could be looked at, if we could do a lot of planning for this, which we can, this would help a lot in minimizing the number of people who end up in those emergency situations.

I know that I've spoken to a lot of the seniors' groups in Orleans. Two of them are francophone. We have the *Rendez-vous des aînés*, about 600 or 700 people; the Gloucester seniors group, 600 or 700 people; *Séraphin-Marion*, 600 or 700 people; and the Roy Hobbs group: over 2,000 seniors in my riding who are thinking about these things, and they have a lot of programs internally to keep in touch with their seniors, so they don't get into the same situation. They're good to be able to transfer the information. I think our Ontario government does support programs that help them with their physical activity and help them with better diets and better lifestyles as seniors, and keeping in touch.

Those programs are extremely important. When you have 2,000 people that this program is working with, you get a lot better connectivity with the people. But that's only for the club members. Outside of the club members—the 2,000 who are in the clubs—there are another 18,000 who don't have the benefits of that connectivity to their community. So we have a long way to go there.

This will support about \$800 million in home renovations activity. This is very significant. One of the criticisms I've heard is that the seniors do not have the resources to do this. Well, that's true about a lot of programs, but some of them do have the resources, and because it's long-term planning and interest rates aren't that high, the alternative to going into a retirement home—this starts to be very interesting. So the more we can promote aging at home, the more we can incent people to make those changes in their home so that they can save—

Mr. Bill Mauro: It might not be a full \$10,000; they might only spend \$1,000 and get \$150 back.

Mr. Phil McNeely: That's right; it's much better for them.

These improvements—they are in the \$10,000 range—can be made for home renovations. They will be available to seniors for many years, so we're talking \$1,000 a year if we are looking at 10 years, not \$10,000 in your back pocket that you're going to pull out, as has been suggested by some of the members. This is planning ahead. It's an incentive, and it certainly is going to work.

Few people pay cash for their home improvements that they make otherwise, so this may be an expenditure the same way. So seniors will look at their options, which include residential retirement homes—these are expensive—or staying in their own homes, where these modifications will make the difference. It will make the difference in them being able to stay with their neighbours, live in the same community they have and have those supports. Part of the supports will be the medical supports through the resource centres and through the government programs, and so the matching of these two supports will certainly make it better for seniors. They will finance the improvement, pay over 10 or 15 years,

and this will be the way they'll look at the project. I'm sure that's the way they look at most home modification projects, whether it's seniors or other owners.

One of the issues, I think, as well, that we have to talk about is, with the large number of seniors and the demographic changes that we're seeing in our communities, we'll have to start looking at seniors helping seniors more. I think it's something that I've spoken about to all three or four organizations that I mentioned earlier. I think we're going to have to do that. The number of seniors who are going to be in trouble is such that we have to get seniors helping seniors. A lot of these clubs basically start getting members when they're 55 years old. And they want to work; they want to do community work.

I think of the old part-time firemen as an equivalent that we could look at, where there are some little dollars that they get. The firemen used to get a little bit, a few dollars every Christmas for their volunteer work during the year. We have to look at that because we're not going to be able to provide all those systems like Meals on Wheels and driving the seniors to the bank—all those other issues. So seniors helping seniors has to be a part of the strategy as we move forward.

The Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre in Orleans is working with seniors and seniors, organizations to complement all the services they have, and they're moving ahead. They have designed plans that are being implemented on a weekly and monthly basis. They're changing the way they deal with seniors. They know that if they can keep the seniors in their home and keep them there well, it's saving all the taxpayers so much money.

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So this is an important program that will work for many seniors—certainly not all seniors, but it's going to be an important part of the package that we have. We have to come up with new ways of dealing with this larger and larger group of our people.

There are programs that help the lower end of the income bracket with these same modifications to their homes if they don't have the funds. They are getting the railings in their bathrooms, the walk-in bathrooms, the lifts etc. This will let the people that are able to pay for it do it on their own, to prepare their homes and make that decision to plan ahead and look at what they need and get it in place so that they're fine.

I talked about the many seniors' groups in our community. I know that any of the discussions I've had over this new bill have been positive, I would think partly because the members of the seniors' clubs are the ones I meet more often and they are the ones that are still self-sufficient and want to continue to be self-sufficient and are moving ahead.

The 15% tax credit has been criticized as only 2% more than the taxes that you pay for your contractors, for your materials, but 15% is huge. And it was huge in the federal program that got so many renovations done to homes.

You have to keep your paperwork on it. I put the tax credit on my income tax, and sure enough, they wanted to do an audit on me. They did, and they found that, yes, the paperwork was in place. That's an inconvenience, but it wasn't that difficult to get on my tax return. It wasn't that difficult to show the tax department that I'd actually expended that money.

So the home energy retrofits are much the same for seniors, the amount we could get into, like a lot of the energy efficiency solutions that we have—air-sealing, insulation, doors and windows, and more efficient heating systems. This would be great to go towards that in the future, because this is all good stuff. I think most of the home energy retrofit work that I did, the repayment—if you paid it all yourself, repayment is under 10 years.

Seniors are a growing demographic in Ottawa, as elsewhere. We must strive to do all we can to keep the services out of long-term care, out of our hospitals, and more in our homes. We must get volunteers involved in that. The healthy seniors' community can do a lot of work to help us there.

So I'm going to continue the discussions with the seniors' groups at home. It's 2,000 out of 20,000 seniors in my riding. I am going to continue the discussions with them to get them more involved with seniors. They're involved with their own members now, but if we could expand that outwards, it would really—a lot of these 55-year-olds are energetic, they're ready to go, they're ready to do great things, so I think the seniors' clubs are taking that leadership.

The CCACs are there with the resource centres to help these seniors' clubs do that, and we have to find more ways to help our seniors.

So as a government and a province, we are moving ahead in helping seniors age where they want to: at home, in their neighbourhoods. We can extend the time seniors can stay at home.

This bill, the healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, will make more homes easier for seniors to live in and make their lives better. This is not the answer for all seniors, but it adds to the long list of actions we have taken as a government to make aging at home a better solution. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I've had the opportunity to listen to the member opposite with regards to Bill 2. I have also had an opportunity to scan briefly the Auditor General's report released today. It outlines the fact that Ontarians are paying more for hydro, they're paying much more for car insurance, and even more importantly, they're paying much more for booze. So again, accompanied with the fact that Ontario families, especially seniors, are struggling to make ends meet and get ahead, the Ontario way, as Dalton McGuinty refers to it, involves paying more and getting less on everything from health services to electricity prices and, yes, even education.

In fact, this bill tries to copy the successful federal Conservative home renovation tax credit, as the member

opposite just recently mentioned, with one catch, though. This Liberal bill does not benefit every homeowner. During the election, our party talked about providing that real relief for Ontario families and seniors by taking the HST off of home heating and hydro. I go back to Bill from Elmira, who, during the election, was shaking, his hydro bill in his hand, afraid to open it, saying, "Listen, I can barely afford to live in my own home with these rising electricity prices," these contracts that we're paying exorbitant amounts for. It's 80 cents per kilowatt hour when the market rate is far, far less.

Again, the simple fact today is that Ontario seniors just simply don't have \$8,500 lying around for these so-called luxury renovations. In addition to that, given the estimated cost, the government would have done better to help all families, as the federal Conservative government had done, by implementing a program that would be available for everybody, or by adopting our bill, as I go back before to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the HST off of home heating and hydro, supported by the Ontario PC caucus.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I had the opportunity to listen very carefully to the member opposite from Ottawa-Orléans, and particularly with respect to some of the comments regarding the seniors' tax credit and its benefit to seniors.

My concern is that when we look at the proposal, it's very limited in scope. If we truly want to help seniors, if we really want to improve their condition, let's make this tax credit more comprehensive. What are some of the other concerns that seniors face? What about the fact that seniors need to be concerned about their health and may have certain dietary needs? Let's extend the tax credit to their food, to their nutrition. How about addressing the fact that seniors have transportation difficulties? Let's address the fact that seniors should have a tax credit for their travel, for their transit perhaps.

Why is this tax credit so limited in its scope just for mobility? How can we expect seniors to spend \$10,000 on renovations strictly regarding mobility concerns? What about concerns related to efficiencies in their homes? What about concerns related to other necessities in seniors' lives?

Let's expand this tax credit. Make it more comprehensive so we can truly care for seniors and truly address their needs beyond the limited scope of mobility.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to congratulate my colleague Mr. McNeely, the member from Ottawa-Orléans, for a great speech, his 20-minuter; it was very good.

As he articulated very clearly, this seniors-focused credit that we are discussing here today is only one of a series of tax credits that are seniors-focused, only one of a series of tax grants that are seniors-focused that we have brought in to make life much more affordable for

seniors in the province of Ontario over the last number of years.

I would say that it stands in stark contrast to what many of us saw before we came to this place in 2003, when we all witnessed the biggest tax shift in the history of the province of Ontario when the former government, the PC government, downloaded a whole host of provincial government services into the residential property tax base, which very disproportionately affected seniors in ridings in every city right across the province of Ontario.

More to the point and what it is that this credit—it's only one of a series of credits and grants that we've introduced over the last number of years. The focus is keeping seniors in their homes. They want to be there. They want to be able to afford to live there. And with, as all of us in this Legislature know and understand, health care costs ballooning incredibly with an aging population, with dementia increasing, with diabetes issues increasing, with the baby boomers just turning 65, we know that the most expensive place for them to provide care is in a long-term-care home or in a seniors' home. So part of the focus here on the macro level is to do one more thing in a series of issues, credits and grants that we've introduced to try and help seniors to stay in their homes longer, which is where they want to stay.

As I said in my earlier two-minuter, in Thunder Bay—Atikokan, my riding, we have the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services. We're currently building 132 brand new supportive housing units, as well as a brand new long-term-care home to address the longer-term needs. The focus here is to help them stay in their home.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to advise that I'm going to share my time with my esteemed colleague—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, just a two-minute response.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry. My apologies, Speaker. I'm a little ahead of my agenda.

This bill just doesn't make sense in any way, shape or form. My colleague from Thunder Bay: I appreciate what you're saying, but it just doesn't get there. It doesn't serve the seniors, and we need to quit rewinding the clock back 10 and 15 years. I only want to look at today and going forward, what we're going to do to help people, not what they could have or should have done.

We need to definitely focus on helping all seniors. We can't make this a "have-not" and "have" seniors debate. We need to ensure that things that we're going to do for our seniors truly actually help them. People, as my esteemed colleague from Kitchener—Waterloo said, were shaking at the doorstep, wondering how they were going to pay their hydro bills. They weren't talking about putting a handrail in their bathtub. That was the least of their concern. Is it a nice idea? Sure it is, but it's not going to make or break their life, if they don't have the ability to stay warm in their home.

We need to ensure that what we're doing is going to benefit all of the people and it's not going to take money out of their pockets at all costs. Most of the seniors in my riding couldn't imagine having \$10,000 and they don't have a Samsung friend that they can go and ask for that loan from. My colleague from Orléans was suggesting they go and get a loan. Well, my mom is 84 years old. I don't think she's going to take out a 10- or 15-year loan to get a \$200 tax credit after the HST is charged and they put the HST on and give her that \$200 credit.

So, Speaker, we just have to fess up here and say that this is not anything that's going to help all seniors. If they really want to owe it to the seniors like one of colleagues across the floor suggested, they need to just repeal this whole thing and they need to do things that are going to work, such as our Green Energy Act that we've tried to suggest that will keep the energy costs for all seniors down. It will help every senior in every home across Ontario, particularly those in the rural areas that only have certain sources of heat. Speaker, I ask the other side to reconsider and give this back, and take this bill and put it back.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to thank the members for Kitchener—Conestoga, Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Thunder Bay—Atikokan—my sidekick here—and the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for their comments on Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act.

I think what has come out in the many hours of debate we've had on this bill was the intent of the bill. It's another way of helping seniors—not all seniors, of course, but helping seniors to stay in their homes, to age in their homes. We have to look at all the many, many ways that this government, over the last few years, has done that, like the \$1.1-billion Aging at Home from 2007, I believe, which was the first major undertaking to stop the number of seniors who were going to long-term-care homes prematurely.

This whole issue is very much in the health groups' mind now. I know that for the LHIN in Ottawa, one of the major undertakings is to get the number of beds that are occupied by seniors who should be in alternative care down. They're working on that. Just to continue building more long-term-care beds is not the answer. We know that's the most expensive way for our seniors. Most of them want to live in their own homes. Most of them want that connection to their community. So this is just one more of the ways that our government is moving ahead with a program that has been tested with the federal renovation. We know that we're going to get a lot of uptake on it. There are going to be a lot more seniors who are going to be able to age at home. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion

for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. John Milloy: Madam Speaker, we wish the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. I am pleased to extend this debate and share my thoughts with you. I would like to advise, though, that my esteemed colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek, is going to share my time.

Speaker, my concern with this Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit bill is that it discriminates between the haves and the have-nots. This bill caters only to a small percentage of seniors, seniors who are well off financially. They're property owners with a higher-than-average income level, thanks to their private investment and pension funds, and I would suggest that they will do these renovations regardless of any kind of a tax credit given to them. This bill does not, however, provide any meaningful financial assistance for your average senior in Ontario today, because it assumes—and wrongly so, Speaker—that seniors have an extra \$10,000 lying around for upfront costs. This is just not so. The fact is, an average senior in Ontario today is getting by on about \$17,000 a year. So if you were to take that \$10,000 up front, that's over 50% of their income for the year. The fact is, they can't get the \$10,000 even if they tried—and I go back to my comment again—unless they can go to their friends at Samsung and another sweetheart subsidy. Therefore, your tax credit, although well-intentioned, is leaving a lot of seniors out in the cold, or, perhaps more accurately, inside their homes in the cold.

My colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek earlier suggested there was a shell game going on: You take your \$1,500 tax credit; however, there's going to be \$1,300 in HST, so you're basically going to get around a \$200 net. It's just playing games with numbers. A wise senior—a senior, I mention—once suggested to me that liars never figure and figures never lie. Similar to jail closings, you're stealing from Peter to pay Paul. What I would like is for the government to truly respect the ability for Ontario taxpayers to pay the freight on their ill-conceived boondoggles.

Even though I think this bill has some potential, it's a long way from helping the have-not seniors, a number of whom live in my riding, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Grey–Bruce has a considerably higher average of senior citizens than the province overall. In Grey county, one in five people are over 65 years of age, people who are going to require home heating every day of this hard, cold winter, and most of them depend on government funds and subsidies to get by in some way, shape or form. They are not going to have \$10,000 to install these types of improvements, supposedly, in their homes. They're housed in nursing homes, one of 31 homes in Grey county, or one of 870 public housing units.

My riding, in essence, represents your average senior. They're struggling to pay their bills, like home heating

and electricity bills. They're struggling to put food on the table. They're struggling to find access to transportation, which is almost nonexistent in rural Ontario—public transportation, that is—and they're struggling to live in dignity.

And \$1.8 billion paid to our neighbours to the south through the subsidies because we have too much energy currently—we're paying them. Somebody said earlier today that we are selling. I would like to suggest that that's not the case. We're actually paying them to take our power, which is making them doubly successful against our own manufacturers here in Ontario. Just horrible.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's \$1.8 billion?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's \$1.8 billion; yes, sir.

They just don't have the \$10,000 prerequisite that's required under your bill.

My colleague from Willowdale suggested that the government has two priorities: one is addressing the needs of seniors; and the other, strengthening the economy. He suggested that they listen to the economists. I'd like to know again how much that cost. I'm sure the consulting fees are worth more than this bill, probably, by the time it's all said and done.

I listened, on the other hand, to the taxpayers when I was going door to door. They were telling me that they're worried about paying their bills, predominantly their heating and hydro bills, and about staying in their homes. They're concerned. You said that you owe it to seniors. Well, I would suggest that playing shell games and discriminating between haves and have-nots is not helping our seniors.

If you really want to help our seniors, then give them a break on their home heating and hydro bills. With rising heating costs, many seniors will struggle to pay their heat this winter. We know that first-hand. My colleagues across our caucus have talked to people in their ridings, and they're all concerned. If you really want to give them stability, comfort and safety and ease concerns over finances, and perhaps alleviate other problems such as stress-related health issues, I ask you: Remove the HST off their heating and home hydro bills. If you want to fight senior poverty, stop hitting them with the extra taxes and surcharges on their hydro bills.

If you look at their demographic, you'll find that the most punished are senior women. Almost half—41.5%—of single, widowed or divorced women over 65 are poor. How is this bill going to ever help those people? How many people in this group will receive help from this initiative and your government? They just don't have \$10,000 extra kicking around to do these types of repairs.

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In response to the statement by the colleague from Peterborough about an aging parent, I want to tell you a story about my mom, Jean. She worked very hard and raised my five brothers and sisters and I. She survives without a pension and lives very frugally—and without complaint, I might add. She believes in paying her way and does not want a handout.

I can just hear it now: “Hey, Mom, I’m thinking: Do you have 10,000 bucks to install lever handles in your palatial home? I can get you a \$200 credit for that, net.” This is key: It’s net. It’s not the big \$1,500 they’re talking about. The net is \$200. “Don’t touch the thermostat, but you’ll be able to get out of this freeze-box, because we’ve put better handles on the doors.” I can hear her reply now, Speaker, and it is not, “Where do I sign up?”

My colleague from Ottawa–Orléans talked about a loan. She’s 84 years old. She’s not taking out a 10- or 15-year loan when she can’t afford to stay in her home or when she’s afraid to turn up the thermostat to stay warm. Is this the dignity we’re showing our seniors? Is this the way we want to treat those people who have paved the way for us to enjoy what we have today? I think not.

Similar to many of the schemes the minority Liberals bring to this House, this bill will require significant amendments—amendments that would actually help seniors, particularly those seniors in need—prior to receiving my full support. With the current economic situation, this government will have to do better than a \$1,500 tax credit to prevent more seniors from slipping into poverty.

It’s like most of the schemes I’ve seen so far in my short tenure in this House: long on promise. One of my colleagues suggested earlier that if you drive by at 60 miles an hour, it looks really good. But when you get close and really start to read the detail, you really start to look at what it’s going to do for people at the end of the day, there’s no substance.

It’s just yet another broken promise, another veiled broken promise: “We will help you. We will be there. We are the people to save you.” But what will you really do? Can you look those seniors in the eye when you’re done and say, “We really have come to your defence and your aid”? I think not.

This marginalized group that’s at the tipping point could tell you there are better ways to spend the \$60 million allocated for this tax break. Many seniors in small towns like where I come from—Durham, Dundalk, Wiarton and Tobermory in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—are worried about hydro and heating costs. This bill will do nothing to address the concerns of those people who are eking out from day to day, wondering, “Will I turn up the thermostat, will I throw another sweater on or will I put another handrail beside my bathtub?” It’s just ludicrous. We need to do more for our people.

I’m worried that this bill sends the wrong message to the seniors who desperately need our help. We need to be reaching out and putting legislation in place that truly every senior can tap into, not those seniors with wealth and affluence who own their own home and have the ability to perhaps come up with \$10,000. I would suggest to you that there are even lots of people with that ability who will not pony up \$10,000 to get a purported \$1,500 tax credit. As we say, when we’ve done the math shell game that the Liberals are great at doing, they get \$200 at

the end of the day. The numbers just don’t add up, if you really take time to look at it.

So, ladies and gentlemen, let’s get our priorities straight. Helping those in need to keep their lights on and stay warm is not frivolous spending. It is basic human decency.

We need to ensure that we do things that are truly going to touch those most in need. Many of the seniors in my area, as I mentioned before, live on fixed incomes, on fixed pensions. They do not have the ability to absorb HST, and then, on top of all those costs, come up and pony to the trough with \$10,000. Many of those people across the lobby may have the ability to do that, and maybe they have taxpayers who are suggesting that they will do it on their behalf. But in my riding, I can tell you, this just is not so.

This is an absolute discredit to the seniors who need help in our province. We need to ensure that we give them the most ability to do things that are going to let them live in a safe environment, in a healthy environment.

We need to ensure that they’re going to have the ability to pay those bills when they come in. As mentioned earlier, my mother lives on a very, very limited income. The last thing she would want is not to be able to pay her bill. The last thing I want for my mom is for her to be looking at a thermostat on the wall and saying, “No, I just can’t go there, I just don’t have the money,” because it would be dishonourable for her not to be able to pay her bill, not to be able to pay her own way, at the end of the day.

We need to all ensure that we’re thinking of those in our society in those circumstances, not those that have the ability to spend \$10,000 to get, again, the supposed, purported \$1,500 tax break.

Speaker, I really, really ask the government to rethink this bill. There needs to be significant amendments. It needs to be more like our federal cousins, who actually put a bill in place that will benefit everyone across Ontario; that any homeowner who needs help and who needs to be able to do these types of things can do it.

Certainly things like ramps—that’s honourable, that’s a good thing, and some people may need to do that. We need to ensure that we have those programs for those people—like a wheelchair ramp, absolutely, a lift to get them up into their second-storey home. But I’ll tell you, Speaker, I think those people that are in two-storey homes right now on very fixed incomes are probably looking at the reality, saying, “I’m going to sell this home. I can’t afford to keep my beautiful, long-time”—centuries, in many cases—“home,” because they can’t afford to pay the hydro and heating bills.

Speaker, we need to ensure that when the government brings things to the table, they’re well thought out. We need to ensure there’s a plan. We need to ensure that we’ve actually looked beyond the headline in the paper, the attention-grabbing headline that’s only going to grab a little bit of a sound byte, and those seniors that come back to me, saying, “Mr. Walker, how is this going to

help me? How am I going to really be able to do this? How am I going to get any of these things that are supposedly assistance for me if I don't have any money to pay the most basic of my necessities, my heating and hydro bill, in a Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound winter?"

Madam Speaker, without a shadow of a doubt, Wiarton Willie is going to predict that we're going to have six long weeks of winter on February 2, or an early spring; I know that for certain. But I can tell you that those seniors that are going to be listening to that predication will have frozen for two or three or six weeks before that, Speaker, because they couldn't afford to do that. They don't have the ability to get a \$1,500 tax credit to perhaps put towards their heating and hydro bill, which is very costly. They just don't have the resources to pony up to the trough.

It's all ill thought out. In fact, I'm not certain there was any thought put into it whatsoever. I think they just tried to grab something from our federal cousins that they know worked, and then they tried to play it down and throw a bunch of numbers in to try to confuse people in the shell game. Speaker, it just will not happen. They're not going to pull the wool over my constituents' eyes, or, Speaker, I don't believe those of my colleagues here as well.

I reach out to my colleagues on all sides of this floor to say that this bill is not something that's going to help seniors. This is definitely a bill that's going to only help those that are already relatively affluent. I myself don't have \$10,000 to throw out, and I wish I could for my mom, but I don't even have that. So is the message there to go and borrow more money? That seems to be the Liberal mantra: Let's borrow more and spend more. But at the end of the day, Speaker, someone has to pay these bills.

We are a party that is looking at that. We're going to put in a public sector wage freeze. We're going to put more jobs in through apprenticeship programs so that we can actually help get our economy going and get our taxes down to where they're bearable. We cannot afford to keep going on a \$16-billion deficit and giving \$60 million to people that already are affluent and have \$10,000 in their back pocket.

Speaker, we need to ensure that we're doing things that help those most vulnerable in our society. We do not need to give handouts; we need to give a hand up. We need to help those people who are less fortunate and deserve our true support, not these veiled thought processes where we're just going to throw money at them and consider that they're all going to run to the trough with their chequebook in hand. Because you know what, folks? A whole bunch of people in Ontario spoke up in this election and said, "We don't have that chequebook. We don't have that ability to just sign your next promise down the road."

We need to ensure, Speaker, that things like the Mississauga gas plant actually get finished—and we really, at this point, don't even care where. We just wish they'd build it so that it could actually start producing

electricity, so that people can actually have the ability to have that when they need it.

Speaker, we've wasted millions and millions, and some would suggest billions, of dollars on a boondoggle there. We had an eHealth boondoggle, and yet we don't have the decency to come back to our seniors and give to it everyone; not just the haves, but the have-nots, those people that need the money most.

Speaker, I have to keep coming back to this. It's just laughable in some cases that we play number games—a \$1,500 tax credit, if you pony up \$10,000. And if you pay the \$1,300 HST, then you're going to have a whopping \$200. Well, isn't that fabulous, Speaker? My mom will be just raving, and I'm sure she's got her pen in her hand at home when I get there to sign up on the application form, Speaker.

We need to do more. We need to ensure that we reach out to those people that actually have to make decisions, and I'm trusting that most of my colleagues, unfortunately, across the floor, have never been in that position. I came from very modest beginnings, and I can tell you that's the life I lived. You go day to day and you ensure that you have the basic, core essentials. Heating and hydro is an essential; putting a little handrail in a bathtub, while it may help some, is not an essential when it comes to: "Do I turn up the heating thermostat tonight when it's going to be minus 10, minus 15, minus 20 or"—for my northern friends—"minus 40?" It's just not credible.

1710

We need to ensure that what we're going to do is put more money in programs that are actually going to help us, not take the \$60 million and get the big headline. That's a pretty expensive sound bite, Speaker. We're talking to the media when we do these things: "We're going to help our seniors. We owe it to our seniors. We care about our seniors." Speaker, if they truly cared about the seniors, they would make this open to any and every senior across this great province of Ontario.

We need to ensure that we actually fight senior poverty. There are so many seniors in our midst who are struggling to pay the bills, to turn up the heat, to actually put food on the table in front of them, and they're just clinging with their fingernails to hold on to that home that they so dearly want to stay in for the last, potentially, years of their life.

We need to ensure that we put programs in place that will help them, not hit them with an extra tax, an extra surcharge—oh, I go back: "We will not tax anymore." I think there was a health tax thrown in. "We will not tax anymore." I think there was an eco tax thrown in there. Now I think we're actually thinking about a carbon tax; that's the last one that I've heard. It's just a matter of time, I'm sure, until that one comes to the table.

We need to ensure that these schemes—and they truly are schemes; they're a shell game scheme. A number of my colleagues have utilized that term today, and I think it fits. It's one of those situations where we certainly are just moving money from Peter to pay Paul. It's like the jails. We're going to move a jail, and we're going to save

money because we can put them in the big house in Penetang, but we're not going to actually take a look at what the net saving to the province of Ontario is.

We need to ensure there are net savings when we do these initiatives, Speaker. We need to ensure that the people of Hanover, the people of Durham, the people of Tobermory, the people of Sauble Beach, the people of Allenford can actually afford to have their heat put on and not worry about, "Can I call some home renovator and get a bar put on my bathtub?" Is it an admirable thing? Absolutely, if we weren't in a \$16-billion deficit situation.

We need to do things that are actually going to make a difference; we need to make hard choices and put programs in place that are actually going to make a difference in people's everyday lives. We need to give them the ability to pay their bills. We need the ability for them to not only want to turn up the heat, but to actually have the ability to turn up the heat. And, Speaker, in this House, we're going to continue to turn up the heat on the government opposite, because they are not doing the things that are actually standing up for the people of Ontario and, particularly, rural and northern Ontario.

We need to do more, not less. We need to ensure that we're putting programs in place that are actually going to give these people some little glimmer of hope, that people actually care, that people actually come to Queen's Park every day to do things for the benefit of them.

I do give my colleagues across the aisle the benefit of the doubt. But I'll tell you, Speaker, when they come with these types of schemes, these types of shell games, it just discredits all of them. It's unfortunate, because I think there are a number of great people across the aisle who I have started to get to know and was able to have some conversations with. But it disheartens me to see this type of thing go on time and again in this House every day.

We talk and we talk and we talk about rhetoric. "We're going to save and we're going to give them \$1,500 tax credits." We're not going to give them anything because it's their money we're giving them. We need to stop buying them with their own money. We need to do the right thing. We need to ensure that what they're going to do is be able to get actual programs and services that support them and serve them.

They're not the people who should have to be paying through the nose every time we turn around because our friends on the other side come up with another scheme yet again to say, "We are going to save you. We are going to give you \$1,500 of your own money." It sounds like that energy thing from about a year ago: "We're going to up your rates 46%, and we're going to buy you back with a 10% rebate." Well, come on, people; they're too smart for that. We know and you know that that was just a scheme again.

This is like, going back again, Speaker—and I just can't get past this until they actually tell us what's going to happen with this Mississauga gas plant. If they would

have just actually built it or not built it, or build it—but not all of them. We just can't keep flipping and flopping back and forth. Then these folks, these seniors who we supposedly care so much about, would be in a situation where they could actually have the money to pay the bills. They're all people who care. They come from a generation that values hard work, determination, paying my bills, paying my way. They're not looking for a handout; they just simply want to be able to live their life within their means, something that maybe you folks could take as a little bit of a thought process: Live within your means. Don't put the debt on the backs of my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren.

Folks, we need to start doing the right thing. We need to ensure that we do things not like this tax credit, that we do things to help people. Speaker, we need to ensure we do that, and less rhetoric. Action, not rhetoric.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: First, I want to congratulate the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound on his very passionate speech today. Congratulations on that. He made some very poignant points; I think the overall theme of his was affordability.

One thing he said was that seniors on average make \$17,000 a year. I think that's probably a little on the high side. A lot of the seniors whom I have met, you know, their pension plans weren't there. They were making maybe less than \$1,000 a month for their pensions. When you take that into account, the affordability issues that we're talking about—and I'm going to average \$1,000 because that's what I've seen. For people who are working and seniors with pension plans, they have to pay their property tax, insurance costs, heating, gas in their car, food, and possibly medication that isn't covered. Then to add on an additional \$10,000 if you want to stay in your home, to put a ramp in—those seniors do not have that kind of money. Most seniors aren't willing to go to the bank and mortgage their homes, because my generation, my parents, they paid cash for everything. They don't want to mortgage their homes to stay in their homes.

We need to find a better way to make life more affordable for seniors, and one of them is taking the HST off home heating, a great first step to show all seniors that we care and we want to help them with their affordability issues. It's not just about some seniors; it's about all seniors. We have to really step back and try to help all seniors.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: First, let me welcome the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Mr. Walker, to the House here. I hope that, given some time, he will avail himself of the various programs that seniors are enjoying today thanks to the Liberal government, which, over the last few years, has brought them in for the benefit of all seniors and not a particular slice of the seniors.

We must not forget, Madam Speaker, that I hope that the members of the House will indeed allow this bill to

move on through past second reading so we can go to some committee level and hear what people have to say. But for the benefit of the House and the new members, there hasn't been a government that has brought in more programs for the benefit of all seniors than this particular government that we have today. Let me add to this, Madam Speaker: Not every program that any particular government brings about must be used or enjoyed by every particular senior.

Let me remember to the member that lately, very lately, they voted against a budget which lowered personal income tax for some 90,000 people, including seniors—low-income seniors; they voted against it. We have another benefit for seniors, Madam Speaker, which they are availing themselves of. We have a tax credit, \$650 for seniors. This one here will be used for people who can and want to avail themselves.

I hope that we can move this ahead for second reading and to our committee.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened quite attentively to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I compliment the member; it's refreshing to hear the passion that he was sent here to deliver. It was a wake-up call. I could tell the members on the government side were disturbed and attentive because he was striking a nerve. He was touching at the very essence of why he was elected and why you lost 30-some members. There's no question: He brings a passion to the job that is essential—and he's a duly adequate replacement for Bill Murdoch, the person that brought reality right to this Legislature.

1720

He mentioned a few things. I think it's important to reflect for a moment on his background. He talked a bit about the implications on Bill 4, the HST bill, and energy prices. I'm just going to look at the bill itself here. Now, what is excluded here is quite telling. It says what expenses would not be eligible, and here's an example: roof repairs, insulation of heating or air conditioning.

Well, you're talking about comfort for seniors. You're charging more HST. We know that, according to the auditor today, the price of energy is going up at some 8% per year, plus it's already gone up 40%. It appears to me that this false tax credit here, you've got to spend \$10,000—

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole:—this shell of a tax credit.

This tax credit, you have to spend \$10,000. On the \$10,000 there's going to be \$1,300 in taxes, and you get a credit of \$1,500. So it's nothing but a tax grab on seniors.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. I think it's very important that we're having this debate here. Obviously, we have a population that's getting older and we

have a real challenge about supporting them. I think that throughout this Legislature, all of us are committed to making sure that our parents and our grandparents have the supports they need, that they live with dignity and respect.

But, you know, I was happy to hear the words of our colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He was putting the progressive back in Progressive Conservatism, I think, when he was talking about making sure that we provide services, that we collect taxes to pay for services that actually make the society we live in more equitable. I think when we look back throughout history, things that we created like public health care, like public education, these things affect all folks in a way that makes society more equal. If we were to look back on history, were this bill to go through the way it is now, this is not one of those bills—and you laid it out very clearly. Who is going to be able to access this benefit? Only the wealthiest people in Davenport. The wealthiest people in Ontario will be able to get the support they need, and it is going to leave thousands and thousands—and I would say most seniors are going to be left behind without any capacity to pay for this. So they are not going to benefit from this. When we look back in history this will not be something that made Ontario fairer, and I think we need to look at it through this lens.

We do need to invest in supporting our seniors. I was a little bit alarmed to hear the member from Ottawa–Orléans talking about volunteerism as the solution here.

Interjection: Way to go, volunteers.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Volunteerism—we have to applaud volunteers in Ontario, but we are here to make sure that we put programs in place so that people get the best quality of service available. It means that we have to pay home care workers the salaries that they need to do their jobs, make sure that they have the credentials that they need and make sure that seniors and the growing senior community in this province have the kind of care that they deserve. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much to my colleagues for speaking. It's heart-warming to hear other people on the same page, because at the end of the day, I came to Queen's Park to be able to make a difference for the people in my community, and this one is definitely one where, if we do it right, we can help people across not only my great area of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, but all of your magnificent ridings as well. I just think we have to step backwards and put some sound reason into who this is really serving: the people, the seniors who you talk about across Ontario, or a headline in the paper for you in a partisan way? We just can't go down these tracks, Speaker, and play shell games anymore.

You've run us \$16 billion in deficit. We cannot continue these schemes, these shell games. They're going to take money away from the very people who you're purporting to give it back to. We've had it too many

times. We need to ensure that we do not leave our seniors behind. Those people built this great country. They went before us and paved the way to ensure that we had good services, good programs and, for goodness' sakes, the ability to turn the heat on in the middle of the wintertime. The last thing we need to do is to put a draconian bill like this, that is only going to reward those who have the affluence and ability to find \$10,000.

We're not going to run this on volunteers. We're not going to go out—I'm certainly not taking my mom to the bank to get a loan at 84 years of age to put some handicap bars in her home. It's just not reality, Speaker, and I think it concerns me more that we're even thinking of doing those types of things as opposed to actually putting the bill in place.

You're just on the wrong track. You're not listening to the people. We did. We got here as a minority government because we listened to the people who said, "We've had enough. We can't afford our heat and hydro. We can't afford to turn the thermostat up. We need relief." We listened to the people, particularly in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and rural areas, and we're here today because of it. Speaker, we need to repeal this.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's unfortunate that I only have 10 minutes, because I have so much to say on this bill. And I say this with a great deal of regret. I do. I have to rush through all my points, and I don't like rushing. I'll tell you why I don't like rushing: because I really respect the simultaneous interpreters in there. Do you see them there labouring behind those windows?

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got to tell you, what they do is incredibly difficult. I speak French; I'm proud of the French I speak. I speak Italian, and I speak Spanish. But what they do is incredible. I could never do the kinds of things that they're able to do. When I hear the member from Bruce-Owen Sound speak at the pace at which he was speaking, I wonder to myself, "How the heck do they manage to interpret or translate at that speed?" God bless you. You're doing a great job.

I mean to speak to the Speaker about the complexity of the translations, because when people have written speeches, and they speak that fast, we should do them the courtesy of sending them the speech so they would have the benefit of looking at it and hopefully be able to translate as quickly as people are speaking. I mean to speak to the Speaker about that just to help them out. I will get that opportunity.

Second, I worry because this is the second time in a row I'm beginning to agree with the Tories. You get nervous, you really do, because people out there are thinking, "What's going on?" I get worried about that, I have to admit. When you talk about Conservative prescriptions for how we deal with issues of revenue, we are miles and miles and kilometres apart—we are. Tories like to always do better than the Liberals, although the Liberals are Tories in a hurry on this one. They want to cut

corporate taxes as much as they can—Tories can never get enough—and that's their prescription for solving unemployment issues. God bless them. On that one, we are miles apart. Now, they're not too far from the Liberals on that one, but I just wanted to say that I agree with Tories on this very issue of Bill 2—profound disagreement about the prescription around how we solve economic issues. I wanted to tell you that.

The other thing the Tories like that I profoundly disagree with is the whole idea of firing workers. Liberals are not too far behind you guys, because they've already laid off—how many have you laid off? A couple hundred or 500 or so already? And they're on the way to firing a lot more? They say this with a great deal of pride, so they're right behind you on that one. I've got to tell you I disagree with both of you on that one, so I don't know how close you want to be with them on that one. They want to fire workers, and you want to fire workers to deal with the deficit problems. We don't think that's the way to do it.

Let me tell you why: When you're firing workers and they go on unemployment, eventually those folks will go on welfare, and then your welfare bills pile up. So one way or the other, you're going to pay for that incredibly erroneous direction that you're both going in.

If people are not working, and they don't have money, they don't consume. Bruce-Owen Sound, you know what I'm saying? They don't consume. If they have no money, they're not spending. If they don't spend, the corporations that you so much admire are going to collapse, and then there won't be any jobs. On those two issues, you guys are, like, really tight, right?

But I wanted to say, as I disagree with Tories, that on this one we're close. But it's a minor little issue. We're not talking about grandiose issues that separate us. This is a tiny little thing.

1730

This is the beauty about Liberal politics—I love you guys sometimes, I really do, because you guys crack me up a whole lot. This is a typical Liberal bill which does little, but in the minds of Liberals, this is almost revolutionary. This is almost historic, to hear the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan—yes, he'll be back in a second—say it, and my good friend from Ottawa-Orléans. "This is a good bill," they say. "Seniors really need it and we're trying to help." I understand the sentiments, I really do.

The point is, as the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said, the majority of people will not be able to afford to renovate their homes. They won't be able to. As all of you know—all Liberals who have spoken know—they won't have 10,000 bucks to renovate. You know that they won't; at least, those Liberals who are close to the workers will know there is no money. You will know, Tories and Liberals alike, that 65% of Canadians don't have any access to any pension. You will know that, I think.

Now, if 65% of Canadians don't have any pension, that means they don't have much money in the bank. You'll agree with that?

Interjection: Okay.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. So we agree with that. That means that there is only going to be a couple of people, a little less than 1%, I suspect, that will apply to get this money to renovate their homes.

The point of it is this: You are directing whatever few dollars there are to the wealthy, those who have the money to spend. And they'll take your money, because why not? If you give them the money to renovate and they have it, they will spend it. The point is, are you helping the seniors who desperately need it? That's the question.

How many will benefit from this little, tiny Liberal idea that is nice on the whole, but it's tiny and won't help very many? That's the question you have to ask, not whether or not theoretically it's a good idea and that you are trying to help seniors. That's not the question. The question is, how many will take it on? How many will be able to afford it? There won't be much of an uptake, is what New Democrats argue, but it's a politically good idea because it sounds like part of an economic strategy.

But think of it: The only two issues you had in the election were this one—think of that. That's an economic strategy, to create 10,000 jobs? This is not going to create 10,000 jobs. It sounds like a politically useful, strategic thing to do, but it won't create much. But is that your economic formula to get people working?

Interjection: Yup.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You understand what I'm saying, right? It's a little Liberal idea that doesn't do very much. And you know something else, member from Peterborough? Just as a little reminder, there are 10,000 people waiting for home care—10,000 waiting, not getting anything. You understand?

What you're doing is renovating some homes, but there won't be any home care to take care of the people that you want to stay in their homes. So you've got a little problemo. Most people won't be able to afford it and home care is nowhere to be seen, because you are not spending. And at the same time, you don't do what we say, and that is, make sure that if you're going to give dollars to the corporations, it's directed in a way that will produce jobs over the long term. Don't just give, willy-nilly, money away that you don't have, that we desperately need. If you were able to hold on to that corporate money and provide some home care for people who desperately need it, that would be a useful strategy. That would be saying, "Now we're helping seniors."

But you're not doing that. You're devoting up to \$130 million, assuming there's an uptake, for a few wealthy people who can afford to do it, because the majority won't be able to. Do you understand how bad the idea is?

The member from Beaches–East York pointed out to you in his speech for one hour that when seniors renovate their homes, MPAC, like that ghost that comes to—not a ghost, actually; it's like a vampire that comes after you when you renovate. Instead of helping you out, they're going to charge you some more for renovating your home. So these people renovate their homes and there's

MPAC coming to say, "Hah! We're going to charge you a little more property taxes, because lo and behold, you've got another washroom in your basement or on your first floor."

You haven't thought it through, have you? No, no, no. You haven't thought it through. All you thought was, "Here's our economic strategy to spend \$130 million and create 10,000 jobs." You just made that number up; you just created 10,000 jobs as a number. It's beautiful, the way the Liberals make numbers up.

I guarantee you will not spend more than \$20 million or \$30 million on this program, because nobody will be able to afford it. And if you do spend more, you're giving money away to the wealthy—money you do not have.

It's a little Liberal idea. It's hard to oppose it, really, because it does something. But come on. Please.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Trinity–Spadina.

I suppose, in a minority government, as the member said, there will be decisions that will be made from time to time as to whether the opposition parties will support each other or whether they agree with each other. I think the member from Trinity–Spadina said that he found a lot in common with the opposition party on this one, and that's his right. Certainly, he's explained that to us, I think, very well.

But when you look at society and at what's happening to our society—the aging of our society and the baby boomers all getting older—what you have is a government in place right now that is looking at ways to assist. It's that simple.

Now, I can understand the member saying, "You know what? We should do this, and do more. I think we can do better than this." But instead, I heard the member saying we shouldn't do this, and I certainly do not agree with that. I think there will always be work for any government in power to do when it comes to dealing with seniors' issues.

What this says to a senior, or to the family of a senior that perhaps is thinking about having a senior in their home again when they haven't had a senior in their home for a while, is that if you need to do something to a granny flat, if you need extra handrails, if you need to put in a stairlift, if you need to do all those things that we know can help accommodate a senior living in a two-storey or a three-storey home—things like renovations to the bathroom; very practical, everyday things that, as we get older, may mean more and more to us—it seems to me that you would want to assist. Any level of government would want to provide assistance.

In this case, what we're saying is that we will issue a tax credit for up to 15% of that \$10,000. So it seems to me that it's not a philosophically driven issue. It is: Do you want to help these families or do you not want to help them? This side of the House is saying they want to help, and I believe that somebody on that side should be supporting that.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to get up and make some comments today. I haven't had a chance to do a statement; I've done a couple of questions so far.

I want to say, first of all, that it's a pleasure to be back in the Legislature for this session. I want to thank all the people on my campaign team and the people in Simcoe North who supported me.

But I want to particularly congratulate all the members from all the different political parties who are new to this House. I can tell you right now, Madam Speaker, that I've been very impressed with the comments and questions that are coming from all the new members of all three political parties. I think it should make for a good session in Parliament. A lot of very energetic and aggressive people put their name on the ballot. They were successful in winning, and they're here, and it's for the good of all the political parties.

As far as the actual legislation today, talking about the home renovation tax credit, one of the things I found interesting is—I think, in some ways, it's a government's platform commitment. They're more than welcome to bring that forward, and we'll see what the benefit is. There's no question that we've got an aging population, and there's no question that there can be improvements made to homes.

But the thing I do want to stress is that I've been talking to the CEOs in my hospitals in Simcoe North, and one of the things they tell me to stress at the hospital level—they're not asking for as much money for hospitals as you might think, but they are asking me, whatever we do, to make sure that we strengthen home care.

Home care has been sort of a weakness that I think a lot of us have noticed. We certainly hear about it in our ridings and in our constituency offices. I think it's very important, whatever happens, that we don't lose track that it's a very important problem we have, and we have to strengthen it in any way we possibly can.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Afternoons around this place, things get pretty slow. People tend not to pay attention. People hear the same old, same old, and they tend to zone out. But when the member from Trinity–Spadina gets up to speak, it's like Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, is it not? The dead come to life. It's like a zombie movie: The dead come to life. Everybody pays attention because he's kind of an equal opportunity offender. He really is. He attacks the Conservatives with one breath. He attacks the Liberals with another breath. So the Liberals listen when he attacks the Conservatives, and Conservatives listen when he attacks the Liberals. It's all a wonderful, wonderful play. It's symmetry, truly.

Here's the point. Here's the point New Democrats have been making. Today, 25 in 5 released a report. Did you know, Madam Speaker, that in the last five years

40% more seniors slipped into poverty than before? That's kind of a black version of 25 in 5. They've exceeded themselves in driving more seniors into poverty in the last five years. Not 25% more seniors; 40% more seniors became impoverished in five years under a Liberal majority government than before. That's the reality. That's the reality.

The member from Trinity–Spadina talked about why this bill does not address this. Not only does it not address it, Madam Speaker, but this is the government that's driven seniors into poverty. Do you think rails in bathtubs is going to help that? Do you think a chairlift is going to solve 40% more seniors in poverty? Do you really think a ramp is going to help the senior who can't feed themselves or pay their rent? Do we really think this bill is going to make a whit of difference in that statistic? That's what the member from Trinity–Spadina was speaking about. That's why we listen.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further questions and comments? The member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We're talking about seniors, and I realize you don't qualify, but because of the great term you had this past semester, it's certainly nice to see you back in the chair. It's also great to see so many of the old members back, including me—I could be one of the oldest—then the middle-aged ones, then all the young ones coming back. It's good to have everyone here.

I'd just like to make a couple of points, if I may. I've had the good fortune to be made parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors. It seems to me that it was about a year ago that the Minister of Health asked me to go to Oshawa, Ontario, to make a provincial announcement in one part of the province while she did the major announcement in London, Ontario, and that was to introduce funding for what we lovingly call the stay-at-home plan. That was \$1.1 billion over three years, and it's primarily for seniors. So the commitment has always been there, and it has been growing on our part. It may not be perfect at this point, but our objective is to make it as good as it possibly can be.

I have to tell you, we just opened a non-profit home in Ajax which we have been working on for 10 years. I appreciate what some of the older members over there have said. In the end, the only way we could make it happen with federal funding, regional funding and municipal funding was that the province of Ontario went ahead and funded 63% of the 84-unit complex.

That's kind of the way things have been going. I believe, wholeheartedly, that this healthy home renovation tax is one more avenue for us to help seniors.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks to the friends—few—and the foes—many. I appreciate what some of you are saying. I really do. I just think it's wrong-headed. Your heart, so to speak, may be in the right place, but when you analyze it, as we have, you're really on the

wrong track. You are. Your only defence is, “We’re trying to help seniors,” which is hard to attack because if you’re saying you’re trying to defend and help seniors, how could anybody attack you for that? But when you analyze it, there isn’t much there by way of the economics component, where you claim that 10,000 jobs will be produced. You probably all agree that that’s a lot of blah, blah—balderdash, right? We agree with that, I suspect.

On the social front, I suspect you will agree that because only up to 1% of the population may actually participate in this program, the only people you’re helping are the very wealthy. I suspect you agree with that as well, and if you don’t see it, you’re lying to yourselves. That’s quite safe; I said it quite safely.

So between the economics of it and the social components of it, you’re not helping the vast majority of people who need it, and on the economic front, as an economic strategy, it is utterly, utterly useless because it won’t help to create well-paying, long-term jobs. It will not lift people out of poverty whatsoever, and on the whole the strategy is a pretty, Liberal, weak strategy. Are we going to oppose it? It’s so hard, because even the little thing is better than nothing in the end, I suppose.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, this is a bonus for me because I was not scheduled to have any time, so I’m very delighted to take whatever time, especially coming after the wonderful, colourful member from Trinity—Spadina—is it Trinity–Spadina?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Spadina.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Trinity–Spadina. Rosario, the member from Trinity–Spadina, is too busy conversing. But I would like to remind the member there that sometimes, member from Trinity–Spadina, I usually stop on College Street and have a very nice cappuccino or coffee—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Espresso.

Mr. Mario Sergio: —espresso, at one of his many bakeries. There is one—I’ll tell you why; I will have to put two and two together—called Riviera. This is not a bit of a push for Riviera, but it is a wonderful bakery. I think they are either Italian or Portuguese. The reason why I say that, colourful member from Trinity–Spadina, is that while I have my espresso, I notice people coming in—lots of seniors in the area, as you know—and they go to the rack and they buy the bread. And I notice, Speaker, that not all of them buy one particular kind of bread. There must be a reason. It is because Rocco, the owner—the baker—bakes a bunch of different kinds of bread for different types of people. Analogy, colourful Rosario Marchese, member from Trinity–Spadina: It is because there are a lot of tastes, a lot of needs out there, so people may avail themselves of what’s on the market.

As we said before, there has been no government that has done more for seniors than the Liberal government of the past eight years. In doing so, we have addressed the various needs of the various senior populations. Now, if you ask the opposition, Madam Speaker, they say that

we’ve got to do more for seniors. Statistics show that seniors would like to remain in their own homes, live in their own homes, in their own neighbourhoods, as long as possible. Even a tiny help to extend their stay in their house for a few years would go a long way to give seniors peace of mind. This is what we are doing. The variety of the various programs assists the variety of seniors—some more, some less.

I have to take exception to the fact that this is addressed to the very rich seniors. Absolutely not. I have to remind the members that they voted against a budget that was, I have to say, so rich for the seniors, because 90,000 low-income people, including seniors, do not pay any personal provincial taxes at all. There is a large section of our low-income population, including seniors, that is availing themselves of these particular benefits.

As the member knows, there are other benefits as well. There are tax rebates, GST rebates, a realty tax rebate of \$650 for seniors. And guess who put that on the market? The Liberals.

1750

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They still won’t be able to afford the renovation.

Mr. Mario Sergio: This is the problem, Madam Speaker: They still won’t be able to afford it. The thing is this: We hear a cry from there that we should be doing more for the seniors’ health care—and, you know, Speaker, they voted against the stay-at-home strategy.

These are the stats: that seniors want to live longer in their own homes. Fine. Wonderful. It’s a nice idea. I agree. How do we try and make living in their own homes better for longer? I could not help but hear one of the members before saying, “Look, we are not talking about a program that gives them a new roof, new windows, a new furnace, even air conditioning.” Well, you know what? There is a program that does exactly that. If you are a senior—a low-income senior, not a rich senior—you can have a new roof, you can have new windows, you can have new insulation, you can have new doors. You can have a lot of that stuff. It is there for their benefit.

This one here will help some other seniors. It is not aimed at everybody. It is not aimed at every senior that wants to stay in their own home, but it’s a program that will assist those that can afford it and want to stay in their own homes.

The Aging at Home strategy—I don’t remember, but I do remember that they did not support it. The Aging at Home strategy speaks exactly to that, Madam Speaker: to allow our seniors to live longer with their families in their own homes, in their own communities, in their own neighbourhoods where they feel more secure, where they have their friends, where they know where to go and buy some immediate necessities. And we said, “Fine, we understand that this is better for our seniors,” and we’ve been doing that, Madam Speaker. We have been helping the seniors to live longer in their own homes.

Now, we heard all kinds of stories with respect to this particular bill, but I have not heard any of the members, including my friend from Trinity–Spadina, say, “You

know what? This may not be the best thing for a particular group of our seniors, but let's send it forth. Let's send it for second reading. Let's go to a committee. Let's see how we can make it better and bring it back to the House." What do they do? What do they do, Speaker? They want to chop it off before we have an opportunity to present it and bring it back to this House.

Madam Speaker, a while ago, while you were still in the chair, you did call for the end of the debate on this particular bill. We said, "No, let it go. We want more debate. We want more debate." So I do hope that we will have an opportunity, with the assistance of the other two sides, because I think we may be short a vote or two—I think. I'm not so sure, but we may be short by a vote or two unless Rosario changes his mind and says, "Well, it's a little thing, but it's still worthwhile supporting it."

I would say, let's send it ahead. I'm sure we're going to have some groups out there that will come and say why they like this bill, why they don't like this bill and what they would like to see changed, and then we'll bring it back. But my feeling is, Madam Speaker, by speaking to my own people in my own area, that if there is one who can avail himself or herself of the program then it's worthwhile, and whatever the government does, we always have to keep in mind that we do it for the convenience, for the betterment of our seniors out there.

Speaker, this is a brand new session here, and we have a long way to go. When we hear from both sides of the House, I have to say, yes, that we have to work together.

We hear comments saying, "This is completely outrageous, draconian." I mean, come on, folks. Come on. Let's calm down. The people out there are watching what we're saying and what we're doing, and I'm saying, don't cut it off completely; let's give it a chance and see how we can make it better to include more seniors to avail themselves of this program.

I hope that indeed we will have that benefit, instead of cutting it off completely. We could have said, "No, we don't want any more debate on the bill today," but we chose to prolong it so you can have the opportunity, and I hope you will avail yourselves of that opportunity. When the bill comes back to this House, hopefully made better with your input, hopefully, you'll be able to support it, and hopefully, more seniors in our province will be able to avail themselves for their betterment, so they can enjoy living longer. If you live longer and healthier, I think it's better for us. Isn't it for everybody? And I think that it's ultimately our wish and should be yours as well.

So I'm very confident, Madam Speaker, that at the end, not only the member from Trinity–Spadina, but we can get a few more in support of the bill. I look forward to that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being 6-ish of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9.

The House adjourned at 1756.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|--|---|
| Albanese, Laura (LIB) | York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston | |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP) | London–Fanshawe | |
| Arnott, Ted (PC) | Wellington–Halton Hills | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia–Lambton | |
| Balkissoon, Bas (LIB) | Scarborough–Rouge River | Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand–Norfolk | |
| Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB) | Sudbury | Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB) | London West / London-Ouest | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | |
| Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB) | Scarborough–Guildwood | Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs |
| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James | House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
| Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB) | St. Catharines | Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB) | Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Campbell, Sarah (NDP) | Kenora–Rainy River | |
| Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | |
| Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Markham–Unionville | Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture |
| Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB) | Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |
| Chudleigh, Ted (PC) | Halton | |
| Clark, Steve (PC) | Leeds–Grenville | |
| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
| Coteau, Michael (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Crack, Grant (LIB) | Glengarry–Prescott–Russell | |
| Craitor, Kim (LIB) | Niagara Falls | |
| Damerla, Dipika (LIB) | Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville | |
| Delaney, Bob (LIB) | Mississauga–Streetsville | |
| Dhillon, Vic (LIB) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Dickson, Joe (LIB) | Ajax–Pickering | |
| DiNovo, Cheri (NDP) | Parkdale–High Park | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation |
| Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB) | Windsor–Tecumseh | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |
| Dunlop, Garfield (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Elliott, Christine (PC) | Whitby–Oshawa | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Fedeli, Victor (PC) | Nipissing | |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) | Oakville | |
| Forster, Cindy (NDP) | Welland | Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | Attorney General / Procureur général |
| Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harris, Michael (PC) | Kitchener–Conestoga | |
| Hillier, Randy (PC) | Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington | |
| Horwath, Andrea (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario |
| Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB) | St. Paul's | Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse |
| Hudak, Tim (PC) | Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario |
| Jackson, Rod (PC) | Barrie | |
| Jaczek, Helena (LIB) | Oak Ridges–Markham | |
| Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Brampton–Springdale | Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées |
| Jones, Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin–Caledon | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Klees, Frank (PC) | Newmarket–Aurora | |
| Kwinter, Monte (LIB) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Leal, Jeff (LIB) | Peterborough | |
| Leone, Rob (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB) | Brant | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| MacCharles, Tracy (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | |
| MacLaren, Jack (PC) | Carleton–Mississippi Mills | |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean–Carleton | |
| Mangat, Amrit (LIB) | Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud | |
| Mantha, Michael (NDP) | Algoma–Manitoulin | |
| Marchese, Rosario (NDP) | Trinity–Spadina | |
| Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
| Mauro, Bill (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan | |
| McDonell, Jim (PC) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| McNaughton, Monte (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans | |
| Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) | Parry Sound–Muskoka | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Milligan, Rob E. (PC) | Northumberland–Quinte West | |
| Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Moridi, Reza (LIB) | Richmond Hill | |
| Munro, Julia (PC) | York–Simcoe | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Natyshak, Taras (NDP) | Essex | |
| Nicholls, Rick (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex | |
| O'Toole, John (PC) | Durham | |
| Oraziotti, David (LIB) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Oshawa | |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC) | Perth–Wellington | |
| Piruzza, Teresa (LIB) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) | Beaches–East York | |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | |
| Sandals, Liz (LIB) | Guelph | |
| Schein, Jonah (NDP) | Davenport | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock | |
| Sergio, Mario (LIB) | York West / York-Ouest | |
| Shurman, Peter (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) | Bramalea–Gore–Malton | |
| Smith, Todd (PC) | Prince Edward–Hastings | |
| Sorbara, Greg (LIB) | Vaughan | |
| Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) | Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud | Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto–Danforth | |
| Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
| Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) | Huron–Bruce | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | |
| Walker, Bill (PC) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | |
| Wilson, Jim (PC) | Simcoe–Grey | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) | Kitchener–Waterloo | |
| Wong, Soo (LIB) | Scarborough–Agincourt | |
| Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | |
| Yurek, Jeff (PC) | Elgin–Middlesex–London | |
| Zimmer, David (LIB) | Willowdale | |

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