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des débats
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Tuesday 6 December 2011

Mardi 6 décembre 2011

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 6 December 2011

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 6 décembre 2011

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**ATTRACTING INVESTMENT
AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2011**

**LOI DE 2011 VISANT
À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS
ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS**

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Duguid, moved second reading of the following bill:

An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario / Projet de loi 11, Loi concernant la prorogation et la création de fonds de développement pour promouvoir le développement économique régional dans l'Est et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario.

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

Hon. John Milloy: At the outset, I'd like to inform the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre. I'll also be sharing the time with the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that of course is near and dear to my heart as a member from southwestern Ontario. In fact, I had the opportunity to host the minister in my community last Friday in Kitchener Centre, where we had representatives from across southwestern Ontario of the municipal level of economic development organizations and a cross-section of people who represent the business community. They expressed a great deal of support for this legislation. It's a way of using government funds to leverage economic prosperity in southwestern Ontario. I think what they were most pleased with was the fact that the minister was reaching out to consult with them on the way in which this organization would work.

There is a great deal of support and a great deal of interest for this within southwestern Ontario and as well in eastern Ontario. I think all of us welcome the fact that this bill is moving forward.

As I indicated, I will be sharing my time. With that, I will turn it over to the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise in the House today in support of the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2011, Bill 11.

Since 2003, we have worked hard to strengthen Ontario's economy and to create jobs. However, as an export-driven jurisdiction, Ontario's economic growth is tied to our trading partners. In fact, international exports account for roughly one third of Ontario's gross domestic product, and nearly 79% of our exports last year were destined for the United States.

With slow economic recovery south of the border and the debt crisis in Europe it is more important than ever that Ontario focus on strengthening our core economic base and doing everything we can to leverage advantage. The jobs numbers released last week by Statistics Canada showed Ontario's employment grew by 16,000 net jobs in November. This is the largest employment gain of any province, and Ontario's employment has increased by 283,400 net jobs since the low point of the recession in May 2009.

While those numbers are encouraging, the fact remains: There are still far too many Ontarians looking for work, and there are parts of our province that have been impacted by the global challenges more so than others. Southwestern Ontario, with a rich tradition and high concentration of manufacturing jobs, has endured a number of plant closures and layoffs because of the global economic downturn. Eastern Ontario has also a large number of people still looking for work. That's why our government introduced the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, which will create the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and make our successful Eastern Ontario Development Fund permanent.

Madam Speaker, regional economic development programs have proven to be effective in attracting new economic opportunities and in creating jobs because they are designed to meet the unique needs of the regions they serve. Just look at the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, which has helped to create and retain over 11,700 jobs right across eastern Ontario and has helped to leverage \$485 million in private sector investment.

Stakeholders across eastern Ontario recognize the important contribution the program is making to communities and to families across the region. J. Murray Jones, chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, stated: "Establishing permanent funding for the Eastern Ontario Development Fund demonstrates the province's long-term commitment to our region. This innovative program has already provided a tremendous economic boost to communities throughout eastern Ontario."

Madam Speaker, one of the reasons the fund for eastern Ontario has been so successful is because the ministry conducted extensive consultations with stakeholders from across the region in developing the program, and over the coming weeks and months we'll be holding consultations across southwestern Ontario to gather the views and the opinions of all regional stakeholders towards the development of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. The consultation process will help us to gain a better understanding of the economic opportunities in the region and also what challenges need to be overcome. The consultations will be central to the fund's design, administration, eligibility and application process.

Serge Lavoie, president of the Southwest Economic Alliance, has already spoken out in support of creating this new fund. He is saying: "The proposed Southwestern Ontario Development Fund recognizes the unique economic challenges our region is facing. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the province to create good jobs and attract investment to southwestern Ontario."

As a government, we recognize the value and the uniqueness of our regional economies. After all, strong regional economies help to pay for the education and the health care system that Ontario families rely on. Some say we should simply stand by and leave Ontario companies to the mercy of those global markets, and we disagree. The reality is that each day, Ontario is competing with jurisdictions around the world that offer significant incentives for businesses to invest. This type of support helps Ontarians compete. If we're not willing to help, those opportunities and those jobs that go with them will go elsewhere. If we can provide targeted support to help a company grow and create jobs, to help Ontario families and communities during this time of global economic uncertainty, then that's a good investment in my opinion. The upcoming consultations on the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund will help to ensure that we get the best possible return on public investment.

0910

Madam Speaker, our investment programs are structured to safeguard public money while helping companies grow and create jobs. The money does come with strings attached: Financial support is contingent on the company meeting investment and job targets; we closely monitor each project over the lifespan; and provisions are in place to protect the public's investment in the event that targets cannot be met.

Regional economic development programs are good for business, employees, communities and the Ontario government overall. By working together in this way, we can help families in eastern and southwestern Ontario to keep moving forward in these very challenging economic times.

The proposed Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act is the latest example of how the McGuinty government is working together to strengthen our economy

during a period of global uncertainty. The proposed legislation will bring new opportunities and new jobs to communities in eastern and southwestern Ontario. That's why I'm asking for all members to support the passing of the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the Speaker's chair. I'm familiar with seeing you there; it's a familiar place for you and you do a great job at it, so it's good to see you back.

Thank you to the member for Etobicoke Centre for her comments in support of this bill—a great member in the Legislature and somebody who I know is going to be working very, very hard alongside myself as we work to move this through the Legislature and seek the support of all members of the Legislature for what is a very, very important piece of legislation, a piece of legislation I was proud to introduce. It's called the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2011.

I was proud to introduce it because it comes at a crucial time for our economy and at a crucial time for our province. The job numbers for November that came out on Friday were encouraging. Ontario gained 31,800 net full-time jobs—that's full-time jobs—in November. That means we've created 283,400 net new jobs since May 2009; that was the low point in the recession. So we're moving in the right direction. We have a strong base in Ontario to build on, and that's helping us to attract investment and to create jobs.

However the state of the fragile global economy which my colleague from Etobicoke Centre spoke about continues to bring uncertainty to our province, which relies more than others on trade. We're in a fierce global competition to bring investment and jobs to Ontario. It is a fierce competition, Madam Speaker. With concerns still prevalent about Europe's economy and the current state of the US economy, this is no time for us to be sitting back. Here at home, while job gains last month are encouraging, we still have a lot of work to do because there are still too many Ontarians out of work.

I will be speaking today about a number of things. It's important that all members of the House and Ontarians understand the fundamentals that we together have worked so hard to put in place to give our economy this competitiveness edge that it enjoys today. It's also important for us to understand the context of this legislation—why it's so crucial that we support strong regional economies in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario. I'll speak to the goals and objectives of the legislation and why we feel and believe sincerely that it is the right way to go.

There are numerous success stories from great companies that are doing really interesting work right here in Ontario, and I'll be sharing some of those with the House as well. They are the inspiration for this legislation, they

are the inspiration for this program, and it is their work, their innovation that tells me that we're on the right track.

Let's start by looking at the fundamentals required to build a strong economy—fundamentals we've worked hard to build here in the province of Ontario. It starts with our most important resource, and I think everybody in this Legislature would know our most important resource is our people. Over the last eight years we have invested significantly in education, from JK to post-secondary to Ph.D., and, Madam Speaker, it is paying off. We have stronger schools today, some of the strongest in Canada. In fact, results from a recent pan-Canadian assessment showed that Ontario grade 8 students are tops in Canada in reading, math and science. That's important. Further to that, international authorities say that we have the best schools here in Ontario in the English-speaking world—something all of us on all sides of the House should be very, very proud of.

Test scores are way up and so are high school graduation rates. Some 72,000 more young people completed high school because they're getting the attention and the support they need. That, too, is very, very important in building a stronger economy. That has helped us to attain the highest rate of post-secondary education among the 34 OECD countries. Again, that's important, too.

Equally as important as ensuring our workforce is the best trained and educated in the world is ensuring that Ontario people and workers are strong and healthy. Our efforts to improve and reform the health care system in Ontario are making a significant difference. At the same time, our efforts to promote good health and wellness are also paying off. Health promotion is a key way to ensure that we all improve our productivity. Let's not forget, our universal health care system is also a competitive advantage in attracting investment in jobs.

I want to talk a little bit about infrastructure, too, Madam Speaker. Through investments in infrastructure, we're making a significant dent in the infrastructure deficit that we inherited in 2003. Together we've built a competitive infrastructure system in Ontario. We've built over 5,500 kilometres of new roads—that's like going from Nova Scotia to Vancouver, then up the BC coast; that's a lot of roads. And with over \$13 billion invested in public transit, we're making it easier and quicker to get around in our cities. That means less time commuting and more time with the people that matter most to us. That means an increase in the quality of our lives, but for business, that means less time and costs moving goods, services and people around.

I want to talk a little bit about tax reform as well. In recent years, we've also moved to transform our tax system, and that's made Ontario more competitive in a fiercely competitive global economy. While my colleagues in the NDP may not support it, the reductions made to corporate taxes mean the difference between jobs coming into Ontario or going elsewhere. It's that simple. We want those jobs, we want that investment and we want it right here in Ontario.

With the adoption of the HST, we've modernized Ontario's tax system to be more competitive with other

jurisdictions. According to economists such as Jack Mintz, that will create 591,000 jobs here in Ontario over the next 10 years. Combined, our efforts have moved our tax system for business investment from being one of the worst in the world to one that's now considered to be highly competitive, and that's very important as well. And while the support we've shown for our business community by reducing their taxes has been significant, we've reduced personal income taxes to an even greater degree.

I want to talk a little bit about power. Our electricity system is getting stronger as we rebuild it and bring online clean energy. That's creating tens of thousands of new jobs. As a former Minister of Energy, that's something I'm particularly proud of, but I think it's something all of us can take a great deal of pride in. Our energy system was neglected by previous governments. The simple fact is, businesses and families could no longer rely on our power system. It was also dirty and it was outdated. It was using too much coal and virtually no clean energy from wind and solar.

Today, it's reliable. Businesses can count on the power being there when they need it. That's really important for Ontario, and it puts us, as well, at a competitive advantage. Because I've got to tell you, one of the things on the checklists of businesses and industry looking at where to locate globally is: Do you have a reliable power system? Well, I'm proud to be able to say, here in the province of Ontario, we now have a reliable power system.

I'm proud to say that Ontario is moving to clean, renewable energy, building a growing industry here in Ontario, as I said before, that's creating thousands of jobs for Ontario workers. It also means we can phase out coal-fired generation. Last week, my colleague the Minister of Energy closed two more coal units, bringing us to 10 units closed since 2003. We'll be out of coal altogether by 2014. What does that mean? It means cleaner air and a healthier future for our kids.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: How is that FIT program working out?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Combined, these key areas help to form the strong fundamentals that are giving Ontario a competitive advantage.

“Why is that important?” the member opposite asks.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I didn't ask that.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Well, it's important, Madam Speaker. Why is it important that we have the best-educated workforce, the healthiest people, a competitive tax system and the infrastructure and electricity that businesses can rely on? I know the member opposite wants to know why that's important. It's important—in fact, it's critical—because the global competition for jobs and investment is absolutely ferocious. We're determined to ensure Ontario is poised to overcome the challenges of an uncertain economy and seize the opportunities that beckon us.

Think about where our province sits: We have access to a market of 440 million people. I know the member opposite feels that's important as well, because he knows that we're sitting in a good place globally to attract investment. We're within a day's drive of our manufacturing heartland, where there are over 153 million consumers—within a day's drive of what we produce here in the province of Ontario. With access to an unparalleled network of skilled labour, a growing sense of the importance of innovation to our economy and a commitment to research in innovation and development, it's little wonder that in 2010, Ontario was named the top destination for foreign direct investment in North America, second only to California.

So let us be confident together. The fact is, there is no better place to invest in the world than right here in Ontario. I know every member of the Legislature knows absolutely that that is the case. Every member of all parties knows Ontario is the best place in the world in which to invest. So why is it important? Why is it important that we act today, that we move forward with this legislation? Again, let us consider the context: While our economy is recovering and we have a good base here in Ontario, there is still significant work to be done to attract companies to invest in Ontario and create jobs. It's one thing to have a highly skilled workforce; we also need to make sure there are opportunities for those workers to utilize those skills. We've been there to partner with businesses when they needed our support, and it's produced enviable results. Our different economic funds have leveraged over \$8.6 billion in business investment, creating over 12,100 new jobs and protecting over 19,300 existing jobs here in the province of Ontario. Providing support through regional economic development funds has proven to be a very successful tool. That's because they can be designed to meet the unique needs of the region and the people that serve within it. That is why we're proposing the creation of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and proposing the continuation of the Eastern Ontario Development Fund.

Southwestern Ontario, with a rich tradition and high concentration of manufacturing jobs, has endured a significant number of plant closures, with people being laid off during the economic downturn. The success of the Eastern Ontario Development Fund in creating jobs and leveraging investment tells us we're on the right track. That's why we want to continue with that program and offer something similar in southwestern Ontario.

As a government, we recognize the value and unique nature of our regional economies. They are truly important. In fact, even just a few weeks ago, Bill Clinton was here in the city of Toronto talking about how important it is to ensure, as we excel and grow as a province, that we don't leave parts of the province behind. It's important for any successful jurisdiction to ensure that we're doing everything we can to grow our economy throughout our jurisdiction, throughout our province, in eastern Ontario, in northern Ontario, in southwestern Ontario and certainly here in the greater Toronto area. That's very, very

important. We understand the need to collaborate and partner with businesses and regional communities to attract and retain investment opportunities and to create and protect good jobs for Ontario families. The proposed Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act would help our regional economies become more competitive, dynamic and innovative and strengthen Ontario's overall economy. Specifically, the act, if passed, would continue the Eastern Ontario Development Fund and create the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Together, they would promote innovation, collaboration, cluster development and job creation in those regions.

As I said just a minute ago, the Eastern Ontario Development Fund has been hugely successful. With an investment by the province of \$52 million, it has leverage over \$485 million in overall investment. That's a leverage ratio of 8 to 1, which, according to KPMG, is very impressive when compared to other such funds in other jurisdictions around the world. It's something that should be strived for, something that in eastern Ontario is being accomplished and something we'd like to see also happen in southwestern Ontario.

Most importantly, this has created and retained 11,700 jobs in eastern Ontario—

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid:—something I know the member opposite, who keeps trying to interrupt, Madam Speaker, cares about greatly, because he is from that part of the province, and he recognizes how important it is to create jobs. Some 11,700 jobs created and retained in eastern Ontario are something important to him and to many members of his caucus.

As we did in developing the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, we will be consulting with the people living in southwestern Ontario to gather their advice and input into the creation of this new Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. It's important that we listen to the people, the businesses and those involved in economic development and the community leaders in southwestern Ontario.

In fact, last Friday, Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of joining a number of those leaders in southwestern Ontario, with meetings in London and in Kitchener-Waterloo. That was sort of the beginning; that was the launch of the consultation process. It was just the beginning, but I'm pleased to say that there was a lot of excitement and support in southwestern Ontario for this fund. We had a great discussion, and I'm looking forward to consulting with and working with community, business and political leaders in southwestern Ontario and establishing the details about this fund with them.

We met with business leaders, mayors, wardens, councillors, economic development agencies and community leaders. All are eager to collaborate and work together to build this fund and to create jobs in the region. I want to thank those groups. I want to thank all the groups that I've had a chance to meet with, that we've had a chance to talk with, that have had input into the initiative already—groups such as the Southwest Economic

Alliance, the western wardens, the Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance, the South Central Ontario Region and the many municipalities, many of which came out Friday to discuss what the fund should look like with us.

My colleagues in the Ontario Liberal caucus—I want to thank many of them from southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario who have participated in the creation of this fund. All of these MPPs deserve a great deal of praise for their efforts to champion these funds and to champion jobs for their communities. I think that's important. And I want to say to my colleagues across the way: Some of the members from across the way have been champions of this fund as well. The member for Leeds–Grenville has indicated support for and the need for these kinds of funds. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is supportive of these kinds of funds. They have, from time to time, advocated the programs and the good work the programs are doing in their ridings. So I hope that they can convince all of their colleagues on their side of the House about the importance of these funds for their communities, the importance of working with leaders in their communities to create jobs in places like eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario, both of which have been hit hard by the global recession.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll let him gabble on for a minute and take a drink of water.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Shh.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for bringing him to order.

I must say, though, that I was disappointed when the initial response from the PCs, upon the introduction of this important legislation, was to indicate that they may not be supporting it. For goodness' sake, we just introduced the bill. Give it a chance to at least be seen. Give it a chance to at least work itself through the Legislature. Give us a chance to have some discussions about it. Give the members in that caucus, and particularly the new members, an opportunity to talk to some of the senior members in their caucus, in particular from eastern Ontario, who have been benefiting from this fund, because I know members from the PCs and I know members from the NDP are intent to put politics ahead of jobs. I know they're intent to—sorry, I said that wrong. They are intent to put jobs ahead of politics. I accused them wrongly. I'm hoping they do not put politics ahead of jobs. I'm hoping that that's not what they intend to do. They're not off to a good start. I've got to admit, they're not off to a good start when it comes to that.

0930

But I know the senior members in their caucus will convince the newer members of their caucus and the members of their caucus who represent the province, who are from areas throughout the province, of how important it is to places like eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario to work through these programs, to create jobs and provide opportunities in those communities.

You know, Madam Speaker, one of the things that really motivates me, really inspires me, is that we know that this type of initiative really works, because we know it's working in eastern Ontario. I'll give you some examples, some success stories, of some of the projects and some of the investments we've made.

Take McCloskey International in Peterborough—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Peterborough.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member from Peterborough knows this company and is very, very proud of that and proud of the investments that we've made.

With provincial support of \$654,000, they're producing screening and sifting machines, as well as rock-crushing machines designed for the North American market. So they're reaching well outside of Ontario and creating jobs. They've moved their production to Ontario from Ireland. Nothing against Ireland, but we're happy to take their jobs and we're happy to have companies from Ireland moving here to invest.

Their job target originally was 50 jobs over five years—this is important because we're talking about job creation in eastern Ontario and Peterborough. Their job creation target was 50 jobs in five years. Well, the member from Peterborough will tell you: They've well exceeded that. They've created 69 jobs in just two years. Madam Speaker, that's pretty impressive. That is pretty impressive, and I thank the member for Peterborough for being a big part of that, for advocating for this fund, for making sure that this fund continues. He's a strong voice in this Legislature to ensure that we move forward with this fund today. I ask my colleagues on this side of the House to acknowledge the efforts of the member from Peterborough, because he has done such a good job in showing leadership and ensuring that we're creating jobs in that part of the province.

I want to look at Engineering Seismology Group in Kingston. With \$200,000 from Ontario, they expanded operations to provide real-time monitoring of seismic activity for global mining, oil, gas and geotechnical companies. This is a worldwide endeavour. This is a company that's showing great innovation worldwide. Their job target originally was 14 jobs over three years. Instead, they've more than doubled that, and now they employ 67 people. That's 67 people who might not have been working in the province of Ontario were it not for that eastern development fund. I know Minister Gerretsen was pleased by that, and I know Minister Gerretsen was pleased last Friday to announce an additional partnership with ESG. That's going to create another dozen jobs. Madam Speaker, that's what I call a success story. That's what I call jobs for a part of the province that really needs it. That's what I call a good investment on the part of this province.

These are just two examples that demonstrate the importance of these funds to the regions they serve. Their success is a result of the Eastern Ontario Development Fund being locally developed. We want to make sure those opportunities are also available for southwestern Ontario to continue the success that we've had in eastern Ontario.

The fight for jobs around the world is very fierce. Ontario is well positioned to succeed and excel in that fight. We have a strong base and the core fundamentals of a strong economy in place. We will meet those challenges. With targeted support from regional economic development funds, we can become even stronger, more competitive and attract jobs and investment in Ontario. At the same time, we can ensure that as we build a stronger Ontario, no region in this province will be left behind.

Let us work together to make these programs successful. Let's put job creation ahead of politics. That's important. That's what the people of this province elected every one of us in this Legislature to do, from all three parties: put jobs ahead of politics.

Let's move forward with an initiative that we know is working in eastern Ontario. Let's ensure that the people and businesses and communities in southwestern Ontario can gain access to this project. Let's deliver for our communities what they sent us here to do: create jobs and focus on the economy. Let's, together, face down the challenges of an uncertain global economy. Let's make Ontario an economic powerhouse in the post-global recession world, and let's create jobs and opportunities for us today and for our kids tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, we can do that, but we need to work together if we're going to do that. We on this side of the House fully recognize that we sit in a minority Parliament here at Queen's Park. The people of Ontario recognize that as well. So we're going to be looking to the members opposite to work with us on this.

This is a good initiative. It doesn't have to be a partisan initiative. It's an initiative we can work on together. It's something that's working in the east: Just ask the members of this House, from all three parties, whether it's working in eastern Ontario. Ask the members of this House, because there are a number of PC members that are from eastern Ontario that know that this initiative, this Eastern Ontario Development Fund, is creating jobs in their communities. Ask them if they think this is worthwhile. They'll tell you it is, because I've had members from that side of the House, Madam Speaker, come to me and ask that their communities be included in the southwestern development fund because they know that it's working in eastern Ontario. I've had members from that side of the House come to me and ask us to spend even more, to invest even more in the Eastern Ontario Development Fund because they know it's working. They know it's good for their communities. They know it's creating jobs.

So I say to the members opposite: Let's put partisan politics behind us on this one. Let's work together to create jobs. That's what the people of Ontario expect of us. That's what we were put here to do. And Madam Speaker, if we can do that, that's something that each and every one of our constituents can be proud of. That's something that will benefit all of us, both politically, Madam Speaker, but more importantly it'll benefit our constituents, because our constituents will have jobs that

they can depend on: constituents in eastern Ontario that have seen tough times; constituents in southwestern Ontario.

The finance minister has just come in this morning, and he knows, because he's from Windsor. He's seen some of the challenges the global economy has placed on his constituents and southwestern Ontario in general. He knows that southwestern Ontario and the people of southwestern Ontario are counting on this Legislature, counting on all members of this Legislature from all parties to stand up for them, to stand up for job opportunities, to stand up for our opportunities to build a stronger economy in southwestern Ontario. And let's get over these challenges we face globally. We can do it. We can do it, Madam Speaker; I'm confident we can do it.

I talked about the fundamentals. We have the fundamentals in place here in this province of Ontario. It wasn't easy to get them in place, but we've worked hard over the last eight years together with the people of Ontario, with businesses in Ontario, with academia, with our teachers, with our health professionals to build a strong workforce, an educated workforce, a healthy workforce, a productive workforce. We've got the measures in place, Madam Speaker, to ensure we have a competitive economy from a tax perspective, and the gentleman on my right had a lot to do with that, our Minister of Finance, who did a great job reforming our tax system and giving businesses in this province a competitive advantage with businesses all around the world; attracting investment from around the world. The fundamentals are in place to build a strong economy. Today this Legislature has before it a piece of legislation that's going to take us a step further, Madam Speaker, but we need to work together.

We're looking to members opposite—in particular, those members from southwestern Ontario; in particular those members from eastern Ontario—to stand with us to create jobs in those regions, to stand with us to create economic development opportunities for their communities. Madam Speaker, I'm confident that when they have an opportunity to review the bill, when they have an opportunity to discuss our intentions for the bill, our determination to build strong economies in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario, members on the other side of the House will support this legislation, that together we'll move another step forward in building a strong economy for the province of Ontario, creating jobs for us today and for our kids tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, thank you very, very much for the time today. I look forward to moving forward with this legislation.

0940

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened intently to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Innovation, correct?

Hon. Brad Duguid: No. Economic Development and Innovation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And Innovation?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's what I said.

Interjection: You said "trade."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, Economic Development and Innovation. They took out the "trade." They're not trading anymore, I guess, because if we're not producing anything, we have nothing to trade, I guess, Madam Speaker.

Anyhow, I listened to him intently and closely and resisted the temptation to interject at times, more than I would have chosen to actually do.

This is a bill that we have some grave concerns about because, as a member from eastern Ontario, we've always been promoting the fund in eastern Ontario because it had made its case. And I want to give credit to my predecessors Bob Runciman and Norm Sterling, who served this chamber so well for so long. They were the driving force behind getting this established for eastern Ontario because they made the economic case that eastern Ontario was disadvantaged from other parts of the province. It didn't have the big manufacturing base of other parts of the province, so it necessitated special treatment, just as, years ago, the PC government established the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, which spoke to the challenges that were evident in northern Ontario as well. So the case was made for eastern Ontario.

What's happening here is that the government, even though the minister talked ad infinitum about not putting politics before job creation—that's exactly what they're doing here.

We have some serious concerns about this bill. The eastern Ontario bill exempts the original city of Ottawa, because it's not economically disadvantaged like the rest of the region. There are lots of problems with this bill.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My concern is not that we are encouraging development or investing in companies, encouraging growth or jobs in any portion of Ontario. That's certainly something that we need to do; that's certainly something that's encouraging as a step forward, given these economic times. My concern is this: Whenever such programs are presented, there must be guarantees, there must be stipulations which ensure that jobs will be created in Ontario, much like a corporate tax break. By itself, there is no evidence to suggest that simply giving a company tax breaks or free blank cheques will somehow encourage jobs in Ontario. It will give a company money, there's no doubt about that, but there's no evidence that simply giving a company money will ensure, will guarantee, that people in Ontario get a job.

So similarly, I ask my colleague the minister, through you, Madam Speaker, to ensure that this bill will have stipulations, strong restrictions, strong guidelines which will ensure that jobs are created in Ontario for families to really help the people here and not simply give corporations or companies money with the hope that they will

create jobs in Ontario. Let's make this a commitment. Let's make this a firm reality. Let's ensure that we're really helping people in Ontario.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm really pleased to speak today on this bill. I think that the history from 2007 to 2011 for the Eastern Ontario Development Fund showing 11,700 jobs created in about 15 ridings is really significant. That's an average of 700 or 800 jobs per riding.

We know the history of it. I think the old eastern Ontario development program was cancelled. It was brought back, basically by a lot of hard work by Jean-Marc Lalonde and more so by Lou Rinaldi, who worked very hard. They worked hard.

I was fortunate to represent the minister for a couple of these openings. It was just great to see. Our part of the investment was generally in the 10% to 15% range, but the investment was all brought in and you could see that in the projects that were chosen the jobs that were there were being guaranteed. There was also always new equipment and new ways of moving into this 21st century that we were looking at creating those new jobs, and it's great to see that it's been very, very effective.

I'm glad to see that we're proposing—and I hope the other parties support this—the same thing in southwestern Ontario. I think it's so important with these small businesses in these small communities to do that. But I would also like to say that I am speaking now for Orléans, because Orléans is losing about 5,000 jobs because of a shift—the federal government has taken jobs from the east end and put 2,800 RCMP jobs in Nepean, and about 10,000 jobs for the Department of National Defence. I will be talking to the minister and my colleagues here to make sure that we move that line into Orléans and that we get opportunities like this from—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: We listened to the minister comment on this new fund that they're bringing forward. We're concerned. Eastern Ontario, because that is what I represent, except a little piece of Brock township, is a part of the eastern Ontario economic development fund possibilities; they can apply.

We've had some good successes. That fund has been established. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke commented that two of our members had brought that forward because they made the case, there was a need, and we've had some good success stories with that.

So we'd like to see the eastern Ontario fund continue. That is not the question. This bill, I think, can jeopardize that fund because you've added in southwestern Ontario. We comment about the \$28 million that is still left after more than three years. We're saying we support the eastern Ontario development fund. We're saying, where's that money that's left there? Where could it go? I believe it comes up at the end of March, so there's still going to be money left over. Does that evaporate? Did you need to

bring in a new piece of legislation? I don't think you did. You could have extended the eastern Ontario fund, which we agree is working and which I support; you could have extended that. So where is that money that is left in there going to go? We've asked for a full accountability. You know, can that be used; are there applications in the process right now that may qualify before the end of March?

We have said we support the eastern Ontario fund. It has shown that it has created some jobs and we support that. I know there are some beneficiaries in my riding of Halliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. So we do have concerns about this bill that we'll be discussing later. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Response? Oh, the minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a while since I've done this. I appreciate the comments from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and my colleague from Orléans as well.

Again, I think this is an important initiative. I think this is a fund that deserves to be permanent, which is why we have brought forward legislation to entrench it and to make sure that it is indeed a permanent fund. It's something that, judging by the comments of my friends opposite, they appear to be supportive of, so I'm trying to figure out why they would have trouble entrenching it in legislation and making it permanent. I suspect at the end of the day—I hope—that they will conclude that it's the right thing to do and support it. It may not be unanimous on that side of the House, and that's fair enough, but we hope that in particular the members from eastern and southwestern Ontario recognize how important it is for their community. We certainly would welcome their support for it and, as well, welcome their input, welcome their ideas as to how we can make the fund even more effective.

The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton from the third party made some important comments. There has to be accountability for these investments. There is, in the current fund, a great measure of accountability and the ability to claw back when, indeed, companies don't fulfill their commitments. But I look forward—to the member opposite and the members of the third party, if that's an issue that's important to them—to their suggestions as to how we can ensure that we do everything we can to ensure that these bills are more accountable and that these investments are more accountable.

I thank the members opposite for their comments. I look forward to working with them to create jobs in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further business? Orders of the day?

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0951 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise to ask for unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear buttons in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? It is agreed. Thank you, Minister.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're joined in the gallery today by the family of our page Owen Thompson. Ed Thompson, his father, Michelle Lyons, his mother, and siblings Aidan and Olivia are joining us here to watch the proceedings.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, je voudrais présenter aujourd'hui Benoit Mercier, qui est le président de l'AEFO, l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, qui sont ici aujourd'hui.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to welcome to the House co-op students from the University of Waterloo who are working at the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation. They are Ajeev Ramnauth, Wasiq Siddiqui, Vanessa Quidayan, David Geng, Alison Lee and David Nissim.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, yesterday's auditor's report was a scathing illustration of economic incompetence and Liberal waste: 460 pages of throwing money at every problem under the sun without results for the families who pay the bills. I want to bring particular focus to your so-called green energy program that the Auditor General said cost families \$4.4 billion more than it should have.

Given this scathing indictment of this program, Minister, will you agree that the FIT program should come to an end today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I very much thank the Auditor General for his report and for his good advice. We're already acting on the recommendations to improve the approach.

Let's be very clear on what we have been doing. In 2003, we took the position that we would get out of coal, clean up the air and improve the health of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister. Please, there is every reason to ask some very serious questions today. I am going to ask all members to reduce the noise level so that we can ask the questions and hear our responses. I would appreciate it very much if we set the tone right away. Important questions are going to be asked today. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We decided to get out of coal and improve the health of Ontario families by cleaning up the air, and at the depths of the worldwide recession, we decided to use clean energy as a foundation for jobs by doing what 87 other jurisdictions have done, and it's already working. There are jobs and investments.

Improvements, yes. But go back? No. There is a future in clean air and good jobs for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, back to the minister: I guess the minister missed the auditor's report yesterday. It was 460 pages, a scathing condemnation of Liberal economic incompetence and spending that is causing families to see their hydro bills go up, their taxes go up, without any results for those families at the end of the day.

Let me ask the minister if this is true: The Auditor General points out in his report that the so-called Samsung deal did not have an economic analysis, nor was it approved by cabinet. Can you confirm those facts for us here today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, and as I indicated in my earlier answer, we're already using the auditor's recommendations to improve the approach. We've already launched a review of the feed-in tariff process to learn what we can learn from our experience—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Oxford, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —and to benefit from developments around the world.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Simcoe–Grey, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: But Samsung and the feed-in tariff investments have been enormously important for the people of Ontario.

The Premier is in Windsor–Essex today at the CS Wind plant: 400 indirect jobs, 300 direct jobs. Those are futures for families. You know, those jobs feed families, they feed communities and they support the economy of the province of Ontario. We need to stand up for families and their futures in Ontario.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, given the way that the Auditor General tears apart your approach with the cold hard facts of the jobs lost, the extraordinary cost to families and the rip-off that is the Samsung deal; in light of what the Auditor General said yesterday in his 460 pages, isn't Dalton McGuinty, by going to a Samsung-related plant, basically giving the finger to the Auditor General, who tore apart that report?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw that last part.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The auditor reminds us to look very carefully at the costs of the decisions that we make. So the cost of staying in coal: dirty air, more than \$4 billion a year in health care costs and air that adversely affects the health of 2.4 million Ontarians who need cleaner air for their health. We decided to proceed, Speaker, with a feed-in tariff program and a green energy approach that would create jobs here in Ontario, direct and indirect jobs that feed families, that support communities, that contribute to the economy of the province of Ontario.

What we really need from the Leader of the Opposition—we know he says no to clean air, he says no to good jobs, he says no to saving the auto industry and he says no to tax reform. We need—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Speaker, we say no to a Liberal government that is ripping off Ontario families, that is costing us jobs and is driving costs through the roof.

With all due respect to the minister, the Auditor General did not say you should look carefully. The Auditor General rips apart your FIT program, which has cost us \$4.4 billion. He cites study after study. For every short-term, subsidized job you create, you cost two to four jobs in the economy. Given the scathing indictment of your program, why are you basically telling the Auditor General to take a hike by boosting Samsung today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, not at all, and we're really going to look at the Auditor General's recommendations to improve the program we've already launched: the feed-in tariff review.

The fact of the matter is that the feed-in tariff approach—87 other jurisdictions have a feed-in tariff approach—has already created 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, brought in \$26 billion worth of investment, and we've got 30 manufacturing plants alone that have decided on Ontario for the future for their jobs—for good jobs.

1040

There are costs in not doing anything, which the Leader of the Opposition forgets. There are costs of staying in coal. There are costs of no jobs. I agree that a

construction job is an indirect job, and it's a good job because construction jobs—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a shame, Speaker, that the minister did not show the same concern for the over 300,000 manufacturing jobs—good jobs, full-time jobs—lost under the McGuinty government.

I remind the minister of what the report says. Page 89: No evaluation was done to determine the economic effects of future electricity prices. No evaluation on direct and indirect job creation or losses. Page 108: No economic analysis was done to determine whether the Samsung agreement was prudent and cost-effective.

This is a stunning, sharp indictment of economic mismanagement extraordinaire that is ripping off families. Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you call an end to the expensive program that costs us jobs and runs up our hydro bills?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, the feed-in tariff approach benefited from the experience of 87 other jurisdictions. The feed-in tariff program was the subject of a lot of consultation discussion and a lot of debate in this House. Can it be strengthened? Absolutely. Do the auditor's recommendations help strengthen it? Absolutely.

Ontario has created 283,000 net new jobs since 2009. But when we reformed the tax system, the opposition said no, even though the day before they'd said yes.

When we combine provincial and federal tax collection, they say no. When we create green energy jobs, they say no. When we have a southwestern Ontario economic development fund, they say no. We say yes to clean air, yes to green jobs, yes to Ontario families and yes to a future for Ontario.

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

Interjections.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister uses the term that their feed-in tariff program benefited from the experience of other jurisdictions. Benefited from the experience? You had the highest rates available anywhere in the world. You created a gold rush that made your friends very rich and made a lot of hard-working Ontario families much poorer and lost their jobs.

Let me ask you: If you believe in benefiting from the experience from other jurisdictions, Spain backed away from this program, Germany backed away, the United Kingdom and the United States, when they found that for every subsidized job, it cost two to four jobs in the broader economy. If it works nowhere else in the world, why are you doubling down on an expensive, out-of-touch, out-of-date, wasteful program that is costing us jobs in the province of Ontario?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, when we launched the FIT prices they were lower than Germany's

when they launched theirs and lower than France's, among other jurisdictions, when they launched theirs.

This is a simple choice. In 2003, we made the choice to get out of coal. He disagrees with it. We made the choice to clean up the air and improve the health of Ontarians. In the depth of the economic recession, we made the choice to use clean, green energy jobs to support families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Look, I'll trade you the applause for the heckling in outside voices. Use your inside voices, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In the depths of the economic recession, we made the choice to use clean, green energy jobs—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, for the second time.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —to require they use manufactured components from Ontario. Those jobs support families, they support communities and they contribute to the strength of the Ontario economy.

We've chosen clean air, good health, good jobs and a future for Ontario families. We just need the opposition leader on one day to tell us what he's actually for, not just against.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday's auditor's report provided example after example of a government that has grown arrogant and out of touch with the challenges facing everyday people in this province. Instead of protecting people's interests, the government seems to be protecting its own. For example, why are drivers in Ontario paying the highest auto insurance rates in the country despite a government that put in reforms that actually slashed benefits?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario, as it has through most of the last 30 years, does in fact have on average higher auto insurance premiums. This is the government, I will remind the honourable member, that kept those frozen or at least at even growth throughout the first seven years of its term.

We brought forward a number of very important changes last year. This year, Mr. Speaker, we created the task force on automobile insurance fraud. We received the interim report of that task force, which addresses many of the questions that the Auditor General has quite appropriately raised. I made that interim report public.

I look forward to the response from the people of Ontario—consumers, as well as the opposition and others—and to move forward to implement those recommendations to ensure that we continue to build on our record of keeping rate increases lower than they had been across the previous two governments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's not just the growing cost of auto insurance. Electricity rates are climbing faster than auto insurance, hurting consumers and businesses. Yesterday, the auditor pointed to example after example where the government has switched tracks and left families paying the price.

Why does the government pay for an Ontario Power Authority to plan our electricity system and then ignore the plans that they develop?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, when the old Ontario Hydro had been broken up, there was no planning function left for the electricity system. It was left to a spot market, which even market advocates said wasn't effective and didn't provide for future power needs.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have moved aggressively. First of all, we are no longer threatened with rolling brownouts or blackouts every hot summer day. We have cleaner air. We are creating a new industry in renewable energy that's creating thousands of jobs.

We acknowledge the challenges pointed out by the Auditor General across a variety of functions and, as we have done each and every year since we took office, we respond to each and every one of the recommendations raised, ensuring that Ontarians have and continue to have solid government, a cleaner environment and better public services.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: And in fact, they ignore the plans that are prepared by the OPA. I just thought I'd add that.

Speaker, families are struggling with very, very tough times. They want a government that actually stands up for them. Instead, they have a government that says, "The dog ate my homework."

Amongst many of the issues that the Auditor General raised yesterday, another question that I've been asking came to light. And I'm going to ask that question again today, Speaker. How much are ratepayers going to pay for the cost of cancelling Liberal private power deals in Mississauga and Oakville?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, this government has done a great deal to help families. We created the Ontario Child Benefit, a \$1.3-billion assistance to families of modest means. The leader of the third party and her party voted against it.

We created the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, a 10% refund to all Ontario energy consumers. That leader and her party did not support it. They want to make it 8%.

We have a bill before the House today, and I look forward to the leader of the third party's support, on our Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It helps senior citizens stay in their homes. Not only do they get a tax break, but it helps us manage long-term-care costs in the future.

We've had a—

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

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. I want to focus, actually, on fixing some of the problems that the Auditor General identified yesterday. You know, electricity retailers are telling people that their contracts offer them long-term price protection, but the auditor, of course, found that consumers are actually paying anywhere from 35% to 65% more than those on a regulated price plan.

So if door-to-door retailers are costing households so much more, why is the government even allowing it?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We listened very carefully to the experience of consumers around the province, and I really appreciate the auditor's observations and recommendations in this regard. We brought in special consumer protection legislation in this area that took effect just January 1. Like all, I am concerned about the auditor's observations and recommendations, so we're going to do a detailed analysis to see how these new consumer protections are working to benefit consumers to make sure that they are being protected and they're able to make an informed choice as to how they'd like to proceed with their energy needs in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here are the kinds of claims made by the retailers: "Protecting your household against potential electricity price increases is always a good decision."

Speaker, the reality is, signing an electricity contract could leave people paying up to \$2,000 more for electricity. Now, if consumers are getting fleeced, which it's pretty clear that they are, why is this government continuing to allow this practice to happen in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Those concerns are exactly why we brought in the consumer legislation. We listened; we responded: legislation that provides for a period of time after any sign-up where people can decide they don't want the contract, opportunities to get away from any contract that's been entered into, additional reporting requirements that people have to comply with. We listened carefully, and now, because they just came in January 1, we need to see how they're working. We need to make sure that consumers are being protected.

But let's be very clear: We're determined to protect consumers, we're determined to make sure they can make an informed choice in all circumstances and we're determined to make sure that they can make the choice that's right for them. We'll look and see how it's working and take whatever steps are required.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, as this minister even suggests himself, it's been a year and still there is a problem here, and that shows the arrogance and disinterest of

this government in the plight of everyday families that are struggling to make ends meet.

The auditor's report suggests, in fact, that there are some 630,000 families out there spending thousands of dollars more than they need to just to keep their lights on. Seventeen thousand complaints were received over the past five years, and up to 90% of those were about retailers.

So I'm going to ask the question one last time: When is this government going to put an end to this practice? Why do they continue to allow this kind of retailing to continue in Ontario?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I said, Speaker, it's an issue that has greatly concerned this government, greatly concerned the members of this House. That's why we acted on the issues and concerns and brought in consumer protection legislation. To be fair, that legislation only took effect on January 1. A lot of very important new rules provided opportunities where consumers could cancel a contract without any penalty, enabled them to cancel even after that period of time by limiting penalties and provided more information and a lot more oversight. So to be fair, we're seeing how they work. We're very concerned about the auditor's observations and recommendations. We're going to match up the experience and take his recommendations. If further action is required, let's be clear: For the protection of consumers, we're going to take the action that's required.

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

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, Mr. Speaker: My question is to the substitute Premier. Minister, yesterday Ontario's Auditor General confirmed that the Liberal legacy of making Ontario unaffordable for families was made evident. The auditor revealed that under the Liberals, LCBO costs are too high, auto insurance rates are too high, the green energy is too expensive—what has been obvious to Ontario families for so long. How long has this completely escaped the Liberal observation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I refer the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, to page 16 of the auditor's report: that "the LCBO had the lowest overall alcohol prices of all ... jurisdictions, with the third-lowest prices for spirits and beer, and the lowest wine prices." So first, I invite the member to get his facts straight.

Second of all, when that member was a member of the government, auto insurance premiums went up 43% in the last two years of their tenure. We in fact brought them down over the first eight years of our administration, and last year brought forward further reforms to auto insurance that will help manage costs in the future and keep the rate of growth low.

There is still more to do. We recognize and welcome the recommendations of the auditor, and I look forward to having the input of the opposition as we move forward—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: When the Auditor General wasn't busy pointing out how the Liberals have made life unaffordable for families, he was revealing more Liberal waste: \$1.1 billion on medical specialists with no follow-up to ensure you got value for money; the most expensive legal aid system per capita in Canada with the least help provided to low-income Ontarians; and \$100 million annually on Trillium grants with no idea if the best projects were chosen or if the money was indeed spent properly.

The Liberals didn't get the message after the Auditor General's eHealth report, and they didn't get the message after the OLG report. Why should Ontario families believe that the McGuinty government will get the Auditor General's report on Liberal waste this time?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that he, in fact, voted against expanding the powers of the Auditor General which this government took. Let me give him a little history lesson. In 2004, we extended the jurisdiction of the Auditor General to school boards, universities, hospitals and the broader public sector, and he said, "I think the Legislature has been pretty good about expanding our powers. A decade ago we weren't allowed to go into the broader public sector." The Conservative government wouldn't let them. They didn't want that transparency.

Then we gave him the power to review advertising because that party had spent close to a billion dollars a year on partisan advertising, Mr. Speaker. Then we let him look at Hydro One and OPG, and what did we find there? A treasure trove of Tory abuse, which we put an end to.

We welcome the auditor's report. We welcome his power—

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

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is for the Acting Premier. Two years ago, this government brought in reforms that were supposed to protect drivers in Ontario. Instead, benefits were cut and rates kept on rising. Now the auditor reveals that this government has dropped the ball on protecting Ontario drivers.

Will this minister admit that, in light of the evidence we have, the plan is simply not working for drivers in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite that, since 2003, rates have risen at a slower pace than inflation, which was in stark contrast to when the NDP were in power, when they went up 26.7%. We have a number of initiatives under way, including the anti-fraud task force, which presented their report to us.

I acknowledge that there continue to be challenges with the regulation of auto insurance. We will continue to build on our record to ensure that Ontario consumers have fair rates. We welcome the Auditor General's

review of our policies. He's brought forward a number of very progressive recommendations. I look forward to working with the member opposite as we implement them to ensure that Ontarians continue to benefit from fair auto insurance rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the minister fails to see that in Ontario we are paying the highest insurance in Canada. We are paying the highest insurance in Canada, despite having the lowest accident rate. Instead of defending drivers, this government is committed to defending juicy profits for insurance companies. In fact, the report has indicated that they are so juicy that everyday people are getting squeezed. People like my constituents in Bramalea–Gore–Malton are the ones getting squeezed.

Will this government take steps to ensure that the drivers in Ontario are protected, instead of the insurance companies making juicy profits?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member is new, and he wasn't here. We in fact brought forward changes because, as the auditor pointed out, the handling of these claims has not been efficient. We brought forward the changes to deal with that, and they're being implemented over the course of the summer.

You know, the member opposite and his party advocated public automobile insurance in the past—still don't know if they're for that or against it right now.

1100

I think consumers can be well assured that we are getting things under control. We have been. We'll work with the auditor.

You know, even myself, Mr. Speaker, I see people who drive expensive BMW sports cars, and they might experience high auto insurance rates; I don't know for certain. But I would invite the member opposite to look at our record. We've done the things he's asked us to do. I look forward to working with—

Interjections.

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

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Grant Crack: Minister, we've been hearing a great deal regarding the issues surrounding Operation Come Home. As you are aware, this is a charitable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member?

Mr. Grant Crack: As you are aware, this is a charitable organization that helps the homeless youth in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and in the Ottawa area. This is an initiative that deserves credit for doing a great service during this holiday season.

Minister, Operation Come Home is working with BottleWorks and Beau's brewery to deliver beer, and

they are raising funds to help those in need at this time of giving.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is simple: What quick solution has our government brought in to ensure that Operation Come Home can resume operations this holiday season?

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, the opposition may laugh about this, but we found a situation that needed to be corrected, and we took action and corrected it, right there and then. Quite frankly, it would not have happened without the strong advocacy of the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

We have brought in a regulatory exemption that will allow BottleWorks, as run by Operation Come Home, to continue the fundraising and job opportunities which they are creating for the homeless right now. We have brought forward changes to licensed liquor delivery service in Ontario so they can now buy alcohol directly from any authorized retail store, including small craft breweries and wineries, instead of only from the LCBO or the Beer Store.

We recognize this is a great initiative. It helps an awful lot of people, it's the right thing to do, and—

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Minister, this is great news, and I'm happy to hear that this government has listened to the concerns raised and acted so quickly to support a local cause and local jobs. However, while I'm pleased with that action that has been taken, I must raise some concern that maybe other charities in the province may want to attempt to deliver this service.

Mr. Speaker, will these changes be more widespread across the province to allow for similar organizations to take part in providing charitable work and creating local jobs?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, this particular matter came to our attention as a result of Operation Come Home in the Ottawa area. We've made very sensible changes in a very short period of time that will make it easier for all Ontario licensed delivery services to operate in a modern economy by removing all unnecessary restrictions.

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I wish the members would listen to this answer, Speaker.

We will also be consulting with stakeholders over the next 15 months on amending the Liquor Licence Act to allow delivery services, such as those operated by charitable organizations, to enter into business relationships from which everyone can benefit.

But may I also remind people: This is the holiday season. Please enjoy alcohol, but use it wisely.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the Auditor General handed down a multiple-count indictment of the govern-

ment's green energy policy. When it comes to the FIT programs, wind and solar, the Auditor General stated, "You can't connect them to the grid," "It looks like we don't need the capacity anyway," and "Wind and solar are not very reliable." He also shocked homeowners when he announced that their hydro bills would go up by 8% every year thanks to the heavily subsidized wind and solar program.

Speaker, the Auditor General repeated everything our party warned about during the election. So, Minister, will you finally admit what the Auditor General has told all of Ontario: that your green energy plan, especially the FIT program, is a complete disaster and utter—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: And again, I do appreciate the auditor's recommendations—acting on them.

This is about the choices that we made. In 2003, we made the choice to clean up the air.

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know they disagree with that.

We made the choice to get out of coal. They disagree with that. There's a cost to stay in coal: \$4 billion-plus a year, human suffering, illnesses. At the height of the recession, we made a choice to create jobs for Ontarians and accelerate the cleanup of the air. The 20,000 jobs, billions in investment—it's all about the choices you make. We stand for clean air, good health, jobs for Ontarians and a brighter future for this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We heard in the Auditor General's own words that the cost of every green energy job is \$300,000, and for each job created, "two to four jobs are ... lost in other sectors." We also learned that we lost \$1.8 billion over six years exporting surplus power while we continue to add unreliable wind and solar projects. So, why does the Premier show complete contempt for the Auditor General's report and choose to visit, of all things, a wind facility today? Seriously, Minister, do you and the Premier not get it?

Will you finally admit today that the Auditor General got it right and that your green energy plan is driving up the cost of hydro bills and killing thousands of private sector jobs?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, I always thought my friend opposite was in favour of solar power, because I seem to recall there are solar panels on the North Bay city hall roof at this very moment. But maybe I'm mistaken.

Renewable energy is all about cleaning up the air. It's all about making sure we have healthy Ontarians, making sure we support the health of Ontarians, and we're using it as a platform for the jobs of the future. It's true: The world is going greener. We want to be leaders, not followers, because there are no jobs for followers. We've got 20,000 jobs today. We've got billions in investment.

The Premier's at CS Wind, Tillsonburg, London, Newmarket—too many places to list in the minute I have. It's all about futures for Ontarians, clean air—

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

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, the Auditor General's report shows that Ontarians are paying thousands of dollars in tuition fees to attend private career colleges but often end up with subpar training and few job prospects.

The government has known about quality problems at colleges for years. But today, colleges that were supposed to be closed down continue to illegally operate, and colleges have repeatedly violated regulations, such as instructor qualifications going uninspected. Why is this government failing to protect the 60,000 Ontarians who attend private career colleges?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much. I appreciate the question from my honourable friend opposite.

First of all, out of the 60,000 students in the system, most get a very high-quality education.

Second of all, we have now covered off all of the colleges that are determined to be high-risk. They've been fully inspected. We have expanded our inspection program. All high-risk schools will be inspected within three months; those being identified as medium-risk schools, which is the level we are now at, within the next 24 months.

We are under one of the most aggressive expansions of our inspections program. We have gotten through all of the high-risk colleges. We are now in the middle of going through the medium-risk colleges. We can ensure Ontarians that the over 400 training colleges and private sector schools will be well managed—

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

1110

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: In 2006, the government passed the Private Career Colleges Act and claimed it would get tough on career colleges. But today, the ministry still has only eight inspectors for 470 colleges, and it only inspected 30 campuses last year despite identifying 180 risks of violating basic educational standards. Taxpayers have subsidized these colleges to the tune of half a billion dollars over the last three years.

When will the government finally hire the inspectors it needs and ensure students at career colleges get the training that they pay for and they expect?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we have actually done considerably more than that. In the first nine months of this year alone, over 100 actions have been taken against illegal operators. That's the most aggressive enforcement in the history of this province, better than the party opposite ever did when they were in power.

The ministry has also developed a student satisfaction survey for students affected by a school closure and protected under the Training Completion Assurance Fund, the TCAF. The survey is in use and was issued to the first group of students in November.

The ministry has recently completed a comprehensive review of the performance measures of the collection process and has developed six performance indicators for the private career college sector. These performance indicators are compatible with the key performance indicators used for public institutions.

We're now holding our colleges, for the first time, to the exact same standards that our—

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

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: My question is for the Minister of Education. This morning, there was a press conference hosted by the member from Aurora, attended by the member from Nepean–Carleton and the member from Thornhill—a very disturbing press conference where Charles McVety was.

You know, as a former school trustee for 15 years and, more importantly, as a parent and significantly so as a legislator, to me, every student's rights must be protected. They must feel safe, they must feel welcomed and they must feel respected for who they are if in fact they're going to succeed.

When someone refers to our legislation as radical social engineering, it is disturbing, to say the least—absolutely disturbing, to say the least. It's so concerning when you consider that, in fact, we were supposed to be working together.

So Madam Minister, could you please explain to me what is so radical about the Accepting Schools Act?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of students for many, many years.

I, too, was deeply, deeply disturbed by what I heard this morning. To the member's question, there is absolutely nothing radical about ensuring that every student has the support that they need to succeed in our schools. Our plan is about creating safer schools, about creating places where intolerance is not accepted and where inclusion is the only option.

Last week I was heartened to hear that I shared this goal with the member opposite from Kitchener–Waterloo. I remain optimistic that this House will be united to fight bullying in our schools, but the official opposition needs to be clear about where they stand. There is no room for division—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It's not traditional to have a point of order during question period, but I will entertain the member immediately after question period. Thank you.

Supplementary question?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the minister for her answer. I want to say a special thank you to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. We sat in this House last week saying how we would work together to be able to move forward a very important piece of legislation so that our children, in fact, can feel safe, welcomed and

respected regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or whatever. That's what we are really all about. Our responsibility and our obligation as legislators is to protect others who require our protection. I'm hopeful that you are not a house divided over there; that you're actually going to continue to work with us. You know, there was some terrible homophobic pamphlets that went out during the election. That kind of nonsense must stop, must not continue. So I'm asking you, Mr. Speaker, if the minister could please let me know how this legislation can actually work by bringing us together.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. The language we heard this morning in the PC-sanctioned press conference was all too familiar. While our proposed Accepting Schools Act seeks to set out the legislation, the kinds of supports that all schools must provide to students, the opposition continues to divide Ontarians. Mr. Speaker, last week—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

I need two things to be mentioned here, and that is, the questions are supposed to be of the government of the day and the policies of the government of the day, and the minister will confine herself to answering government policy of the day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am standing, and I'm asking for attention, please.

My request is that we stay focused on government business of the day in the answers and the questions.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Mr. Speaker, last week, I stood in the media studio at Queen's Park with over a dozen partners in education, including public and Catholic school board associations, public and Catholic teachers, students representing both school boards, to stand up against bullying. Ontarians are united against bullying. Students need our support now, and they deserve support from each and every member of this House in a unanimous way.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Office of the Auditor General has released its 2011 annual report, which states that Ontario does not have significant measures in place to combat auto insurance fraud, which may cost the system as much as \$1.3 billion. Benefit costs in cities like Brampton rose by 37% a year in recent years, compared to just 14% in other areas of the province. The average cost of automobile accident insurance claims in Ontario is five times higher than the average injury claim in other provinces. Will the government commit to establishing a special unit of the crown attorney, an office of financial crimes prosecution, that would fight fraud and keep Brampton and other Ontario drivers from paying more?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. He is a new member; he would not have been here for the last budget, when we created a task force. That task force was in the budget. The member's party voted against it. That task force has now presented its interim report. We made that report public last week. It has been widely circulated, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to a response to that report.

By the way, the task force is chaired by a former deputy minister of the federal finance department, a well-regarded Canadian. There are comprehensive recommendations that involve the Ministry of the Attorney General and a number of others with respect to fraud.

I welcome your question and I thank you for it. I just wish your party had voted for the initiative seven months ago, as we did on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1120

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Deputy Premier: I have read the report from the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force. The task force itself reports that fraud is extensive, increasing, and has a substantial impact on auto insurance premiums. In fact, in 2009, there were 75,000 injury claims filed while there were only 62,000 injuries from automobile accidents actually reported—a 20% difference.

Fraud can have a financial impact through increased costs in premiums and a public safety impact through staged accidents. Both the US and Britain have dedicated insurance fraud investigation organizations. These units have dramatically decreased fraud. Since the Auditor General and the task force have acknowledged that fraud is a growing concern, will the government take action and establish a special unit of the crown attorney, an office of financial crimes prosecution, to fight auto insurance fraud?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we will act on the recommendations of the report. I thank the member for having reviewed it. He correctly notes that the report does, in fact, deal with those issues. It is a little difficult to understand because his party, the caucus, and his leader voted against it.

It was a good initiative. It has been well received by the industry. I remind the member opposite that the party he's a member of—in their last three years in office, insurance rates went up 43%. We're not going to go back; I can assure you of that. I know you weren't part of that; you're a new part of the caucus. Many of your colleagues were. Even your leader said with regard to your insurance record—this is what the Leader of the Opposition said: "We lost track of the advice ... and as a result insurance rates went up." That hasn't happened under our government. It won't. I look forward to your support of the task force's recommendations.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To the Minister of Agriculture: Entire communities in the Windsor and Essex area have been affected by unprecedented rainfall and major flood-

ing. Although this is not a new phenomenon, the incidences of rainfall have increased in frequency considerably in the last couple of years.

For residents like George Tuer of Belcreft Beach, this is the 11th flood in eight years, with damage of up to \$20,000 and the risk of increased insurance costs. For the community, the floods have put more strain on the sewer systems, emergency services and the resources of municipalities that are already strapped for cash.

My question is simple: Does the province have a plan for the residents of Belcreft Beach so that they don't have to undergo constant flooding, property and emotional damage?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We're always open to working with our friends on the other side of the House as they bring to our attention issues of concern. We are always open to hearing those and working with our stakeholders, which is why we've developed the southwestern economic development fund and why we've stood so consistently with rural Ontario on a number of initiatives—everything from rural economic development to our highly-touted risk management plan, which the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has referred to as the single most significant social policy impacting the agricultural community in the—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It sounds like the minister is struggling for a little bit of an answer there, so I'll help him.

Under the Drainage Act, residents are responsible for paying for improvements to the system. Residents of Belcreft Beach are being told that they are the ones who have to call for an engineering study. Residents are the ones who are also being told that they have to foot the bill. So far, residents have paid \$350,000, and the next round of Band-Aid repairs is expected to be around \$55,000.

Why isn't the province stepping up to hold its end of the deal for the residents and farmers of Belcreft Beach?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, I don't know if the honourable member opposite knows this or not, but to the best of my knowledge, we have not been approached by the community with any specific requests to consider some kind of emergency relief. We, of course, are always open to hearing from communities with respect to those issues, many completely beyond control. We don't control the rain here any more than the good farm constituents do there.

So if there is a request that is to be forthcoming, we look forward to hearing more about it, and we'll respond with all the due diligence and respect that our rural constituencies deserve.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham my constituents are concerned about the impact that coal-fired generating plants are having on their health.

From 1995 to 2003, the province was dependent on this dirty form of electricity, and under the Conservative government the use of coal increased an astonishing 127%.

As a physician, I know first-hand that the emissions from coal plants pollute the air we breathe and lead to more respiratory illness in the province. I think we can all agree that replacing coal with cleaner sources of power is the right approach to a more modern and reliable green energy system.

Can the minister tell this House what the province is doing to rid our system of this dirty form of electricity?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the question. It's a very important one, because it is all about the health of Ontarians.

You know, 2.4 million Ontarians have a respiratory challenge of some sort and depend on clean air, or their abilities are limited or worse, so we made a decision in 2003 to get out of coal. It's never going to be easy and it has its costs, but the costs of staying in coal are more than \$4 billion a year and thousands of people adversely affected by bad air.

Are we making progress? We're 90% out of its use. We've shut down 10 of 19 units. We are on track to get out of coal completely and clean up the air through no more coal by 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister. My constituents and I support Ontario's shift to cleaner sources of energy. We want to ensure that our children and grandchildren have a healthier future. I'm very pleased that Ontario is on track to replace dirty coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of power by 2014, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is undertaking one of the biggest climate change initiatives in North America. I know that this plan will have several positive benefits for all Ontarians.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what impact this initiative has had and will have on my constituents and the people of Ontario?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Last Thursday, I was with the Minister of Health and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt at Sick Kids Hospital. We met a young woman there who'd been helped greatly by the respiratory clinic. She'd suffered for years—and still suffers—from asthma. It's much better now, but a couple of years ago, she couldn't walk and keep up with her friends. Now, through the help of the respiratory clinic and, yes, cleaner air, she's able to join the cross-country team.

Clean air affects people in their everyday lives. It affects the young. It affects the old. It affects all in between. It affects 2.4 million Ontarians. We need to clean up the air. We're going to continue the progress, get out of coal and improve the health of Ontarians.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Auditor General released his

report, a scathing condemnation of that government. He noted that your green energy strategy costs two to four jobs in other sectors for every job it creates in energy generation. Independent estimates suggest that your policy will increase small business energy costs by 8% every year, increasing hydro costs by almost 50% since before this policy was introduced.

When will you get off the backs of small business owners all over this province and stop killing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Actually, we're very focused on the bottom line. When we brought in the industrial rate energy policy, that was about improving the bottom line of businesses. When we brought in tax reform, the HST, that's about improving business competitiveness. They said yes the day before; they said no the day after.

When we harmonized the taxes, that benefits businesses. When we decreased the cost of manufacturing plants and equipment in Ontario, that's about improving businesses. When we saved the auto industry, that was about helping businesses. The southwest economic development fund: That's about helping businesses.

They say "jobs," but every initiative, they say no to. When will they stand up and say yes to something? Yes to jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1130

Mr. Todd Smith: Perhaps the minister didn't hear my question. It had to do with the Green Energy Act and the fact that it's killing jobs in this province.

The Auditor General's report came out yesterday. Perhaps someone should read it to the minister and he can stop having the fairy tale that's being read to him by the Premier read to him, as it has been.

This criticism isn't coming from this side of the House. The criticism is coming from this book: the Auditor General's annual report. According to his report, small businesses were paying \$38 a month for renewable power on their hydro bill in 2010 and will be paying \$500 a month for that same amount of power by 2018.

How can you stand in the House and expect Ontario businesses to keep creating jobs—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know what? Jobs feed families. The 20,000 jobs through the green energy program already—they feed families. The jobs that we protected and created through the HST—they feed families. The jobs through the saving of the auto industry, half a million Ontarians—they feed families. The jobs through tax reductions for small businesses and for plants and equipment in Ontario—they feed families.

But you know, every time we say yes to jobs, they say no. Every time we bring an initiative like the HST, they change their mind and say no. You can't do one thing one week, one thing another—

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

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. The city of Toronto is proposing funding cuts to three women's shelters which are partially funded by the province. Is she aware of these cuts and what is she doing about it?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to stand up and speak about protecting women, today being December 6. Today has a dark history in our province and I know that it is a day when we should all think about what steps we can make to ensure that women are more protected here in Toronto and right across the province. That's why I'm so proud of the efforts that our government has taken with respect to developing a sexual violence action plan, a domestic violence action plan.

Certainly I take the question away with me today, and I understand one of the members opposite has come over to inform us of that. As we do every single day, we take away the issues and ensure that women are safe and protected in—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it is December 6. It's the national day of action on violence against women; we all are wearing the buttons. But wearing the buttons is simply not good enough.

Bellwoods House in Toronto is one of the places that is looking to get severe cuts and perhaps shut its doors to women. In houses like that, this is a serious problem. This particular house has women that are over 50 years old fleeing domestic violence as its residents. In fact, one of the residents said this: "It's going to pull me back into a life I don't want to live," if that shelter closes.

So my question is a very, very obvious one. These women need a place to go. They need a safe haven from violence that they experience in their home. I want to know from this minister, will she commit to finding a solution that spares these shelters from the city's budget cuts?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: On this day and every other, it is incumbent upon us in the Legislature to raise issues and work with those in other levels of government. But those that have responsibility at the city of Toronto need to take that responsibility seriously. I take my responsibility to protect women in this province very seriously. That's why we have stepped in on numerous occasions when the federal government stepped away and we will continue to advocate and champion on behalf of women; it's why we are investing more than \$175 million in 182 agencies that offer counselling programs and services to victims of abuse.

But, Speaker, we cannot do it alone. We need partners at all levels of government.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean–Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm making a point of order on section 23(h), where a member "makes allegations against another member"; on section (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member"; on (j), "charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood"; and (k), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Earlier in question period, both the Minister of Education and the member for Etobicoke Centre made allegations on members, including myself, regarding a press conference which took place in these assembly grounds earlier today, which I briefly attended as critic.

My views on anti-bullying, in this chamber, have not changed. My views on anti-bullying are well-known in this chamber. And Mr. Speaker, for those members to impugn a motive or utterances which do not reflect me or my values need to be held to account. Thank you very much.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. On the same point of order, the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: On the same point of order, on all four counts of section 23(h), (i), (j) and (k), Speaker: This morning, I did sponsor a press conference at the request of citizens who wanted to share with the Legislature and with the public their views on a piece of legislation tabled in this House. I am one who believes that people in this province should in fact have the opportunity to express their views, regardless of what they might be. We say in this House often that this House is not ours; it is the people's House. It's for that reason that when I was called and asked if this group could in fact use the media room to make their point, I agreed. And yes, I did attend the conference, along with some of my colleagues, for the same reason that others in this place from time to time attend a media conference: to hear what the point is that is being made. I think that's my responsibility.

Having said that, the last thing I expected today from the member from Etobicoke Centre was for her to stand in her place and ascribe to me personally, other members of my caucus and the entire caucus—by not only the member but the Minister of Education.

Speaker, words were used by the member from Etobicoke Centre as well as the Minister of Education that are highly offensive to me personally; that are offensive not only to members of my caucus but to everyone in this province. The last thing that we would have expected from the member opposite and from the Minister of Education is the kind of insult that was levelled against us in this place.

Speaker, you knew. As you were sitting in your chair you saw what was happening here and the kind of

reaction that that question and the minister's response evoked from not only those who were directly named by the member from Etobicoke Centre but the entire PC caucus. According to my reading of the standing orders, Speaker, when in fact a question like that is put and the reaction is what it was, it is the responsibility of the Speaker to rule that question out of order and the conduct out of order.

Now, Speaker, I ask you to make your statement and to rule on this matter because it will set a tone for how this House is conducted and how members are allowed to treat each other in this place. If that is the kind of thing we can expect in this place, I submit to you, sir, that we have some dark days ahead in this House. We should be conducting our business out of a position of respect, not ascribing motive to other members and particularly the base kind of accusations that we heard in the House today.

Speaker, I ask you to assume your role as Speaker and rule accordingly.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order, government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I rise just to give the context of what we're talking about today. The member for Etobicoke Centre and the Minister of Education had an exchange today as part of a government question related to a piece of legislation which is before the House. During the course of their exchange, they made reference to the fact that members of the official opposition had sponsored a press conference this morning and had attended that press conference. We just heard from the honourable member that that is the statement of fact and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It was very quiet when both points of orders from the opposition were presented. I am asking for no interjections from this moment on. They are providing comment on the same point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, in the course of the exchange, in the course of the debate that goes on in the Legislature, reference was made about a press conference that was held this morning, the fact that it was sponsored by members of the opposition and that some of those members were present, and the contents of that press conference.

As we know, there is a cut and thrust here in the Legislature in terms of debate. Facts were put on the table. The honourable members don't like those facts. That's part of the cut and thrust of question period. We're dealing with facts which the member just confirmed happened: the fact that the press conference was sponsored and that they attended.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same point of order?

Mr. Jim Wilson: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm not sure I can put it any more eloquently than what my colleagues have said, the member for

Newmarket–Aurora and the member for Nepean–Carleton. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, and I say through you to the House leader, to the member for Etobicoke Centre, to the Minister of Education and to all members of the Liberal caucus: That's despicable, what you did today. It clearly was a set-up from the beginning. It is unfortunate that it has become—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Address the Speaker, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It is unfortunate that it has become a policy here that we are not allowed to interrupt question period. You clearly violated the rights of this House, of democracy, of freedom of speech. It was a set-up from the beginning. Mr. Speaker, I would ask in the future that you rule early on when you see that it's a set-up. You don't have to have earmuffs on to not see what was coming.

The fact of the matter is, the honourable members are quite correct in stating that standing order 23 says, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she"—and they cite four subsections; I'll cite two—"Makes allegations against another member," clearly allegations were made against another member, and "Uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." Clearly disorder was created, and clearly what you said was very unfair.

As I said, I don't think I've seen anything as bad in 21 years here. It's certainly below you as an honourable member of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I found it shocking that you allow your colleagues to set you up for such low demeanour.

Mr. Speaker, if you're unable to rule against the member for some other reason, I think the honourable member at the very least—both honourable members, the member for Etobicoke Centre and the Minister of Education—should do the honourable thing and apologize to my colleagues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same point of order?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I rise on the point of order that I had indicated the event was sponsored by the member from Newmarket–Aurora and that two other members attended. I then went on to attribute the comments that were made around radical engineering to Charles McVety, so I did not indicate, if you read Hansard to the extent—fair enough; I appreciate the point.

For me, I stand by the fact that we have a responsibility, when we introduce a piece of legislation, to be prepared to work with another group to move that legislation forward in a way that benefits the people of Ontario and, in particular, the students, who do suffer extraordinary discrimination based on gender identification.

So for me, it is very disturbing. I appreciate, and I'm thrilled, that the members opposite here are so angry, as I am, that someone had the audacity to stand in a press

conference and speak about radical gender engineering. So I'm thrilled, and I stand by my comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Newmarket–Aurora on the same point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, Hansard will tell us precisely what was said. The reason for our reaction to what both the member from Etobicoke Centre as well as the education minister said today is that they not only implied, they expressly stated, that we endorse the positions that were discussed at that press conference.

The transcript of that media conference will also confirm that when the individuals were asked if they had the support of any MPPs in this House for their position, the express response was, "No." They indicated very clearly that they were here to express their views and their concerns on a piece of legislation.

I say again, if it gets to the point where people are intimidated for expressing their views in this place, whether it is a member of the House or a member of the public in our media conference, it's a sad day in this Legislature. Let it not happen, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. One moment please.

I'm prepared to rule on the points of order. I do want to remind all members that I'm still a little bit of a rookie, but I will admit to my foible, and that was I was not quick enough to stand when I should have. I apologize to the members in this House for my mistake. I honestly believed as it was happening—I had that instinct to jump, but I wanted to make sure that I was making the right choice. I will not second-guess myself from here on in, and I apologize to all members.

However, I also want to remind all members that I'm suspicious that this would not have happened if we continued to keep our questions and our answers on the government, of the administration of the responsibility of the government, which I did remind you right off the bat. So they should not seek opinions on any other policies or procedures or actions of other parties. Nor should they reflect the character or the conduct of any member. I have heard some of the heckling that is referring to individuals and that is not helpful.

We are trying to set a tone, and I appreciate the comments that were made. I would also ask that all members be cognizant of that particular guideline within our own rules. If it stays there, we would probably avoid this point of order.

I believe there are no deferred votes, so this House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a number of guests who are here for the introduction of my private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, later this afternoon.

In the gallery today are John Gignac, who tragically lost his niece and her family to carbon monoxide poisoning; Andy Glynn from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, which recently passed a resolution supporting requiring detectors in all homes; Matthew Jackson from Enbridge; Carol Heller and Marie-Claude Lavigueur from Kidde Canada Ltd.; Daniel Langlois, Canadian Standards Association; and Pat Folliott, Mary Ellen Sheppard and Chuck Rachlis, who have all been very supportive and helped to raise awareness about the need for carbon monoxide detectors in the home. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park and thank them for being here in support of such a worthwhile project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We welcome our guests. Thank you for being here.

Introduction of guests?

The Speaker has some guests. With us today in the Speaker's gallery is a delegation comprised of senators and representatives from the Missouri General Assembly: Senator Tim Green, Senator Brian Munzlinger, Representative T.J. Berry, Representative Casey Guernsey, Representative Jason Holsman, Representative Thomas Long, Representative Mike McGhee, Representative Genise Montecillo and Representative Clem Smith. How do we welcome our guests?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They did ask me some interesting questions, and I was very neutral in my response.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOOD SAFETY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississippi—no.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It has nothing to do with Missouri.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This statement concerns a man's constitutional right to choose the food he wants to eat. In November 2009, Mark Tijssen was charged under four different sections of the Food Safety and Quality Act because he bought a local pig and slaughtered it to feed his family.

A Ministry of Natural Resources enforcement officer sat in a neighbour's tree stand for five days watching Mark and his children in their home with night vision goggles. The MNR then raided Mark's home with six squad cars with flashing lights.

The maximum fine was \$100,000, but Mark was told that it would be reduced to \$1,000, if he pleaded guilty. But Mark didn't do anything wrong and he decided to

fight the charges in court. Mark Tijssen acted as his own attorney, arguing that he had a constitutional right to choose the food he wants to eat.

Today, the MNR delivered a letter to Mark Tijssen, stating that they will drop all charges after two years of numerous court appearances.

This is a constitutional victory and vindication for Mark Tijssen, a man who had the strength and courage to stand up against a wrongful government action and to fight for the principle of what was right. Mark Tijssen is a great Canadian. Thank you.

NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR FOOD BANK

Miss Monique Taylor: This Saturday afternoon, I will be opening my constituency office with the residents of Hamilton Mountain. This open house will take place from 1 till 3 this Saturday afternoon at our location at 952 Concession Street at Upper Gage. People can take a break from their Christmas shopping and come and spend some time with us with some refreshments, light snacks and a little holiday cheer.

We are asking that people bring with them a non-perishable food item to donate to the Neighbour to Neighbour food bank that is located in my riding. They provide many services to the residents of Hamilton Mountain, and with the holiday season right around the corner, there's a great need in our community.

In addition to being a food bank, this wonderful organization offers a number of other services. They have children's tutoring programs, they provide one-on-one support for local schoolchildren, they provide resource counsellors to help women fighting violence, they connect with residents in need with various services available in the community, and they work in partnership to support many other valuable programs.

Neighbour to Neighbour services over 1,000 residents in the area with the help of over 100 dedicated volunteers. I would like to thank them all very much for the great work that they do in making our community a better place.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a quick moment and wish all of the residents of Hamilton Mountain a very happy holiday—

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

ETOBICOKE GENERAL HOSPITAL

M. Shafiq Qadri: Monsieur le Président, je veux vous informer des développements extraordinaires dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke nord.

I rise today to announce an extraordinary development in my own riding of Etobicoke North: a \$200-million grant of funding to Etobicoke General Hospital for a magnificent expansion.

Etobicoke General Hospital has been a hub of excellent medical care for more than four decades. Something in the order of about 200,000 residents in all of Etobi-

coke, not merely Etobicoke North, are very well served. We have something like 50,000 outpatients annually, 15,000 inpatients, about 65,000 emergency room visits and, of course, the statistics go on.

This particular expansion, this grant of \$200 million, will allow the existing facility to have a new emergency department, a new critical care unit, new intensive care units and a whole host of other facilities. If you have a tour of the actual facility, Speaker, you too will be impressed. It's something on the order of a one-acre expansion on four storeys. As I say, it's going to be the jewel in the crown of Etobicoke North.

I'd like to thank the many, many individuals, not only the Minister of Health, the government of Ontario, the various bureaucrats and the various ministries that have been part of this extraordinary development. I invite all members of the Legislature to the opening.

PAN AM GAMES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, I'd first like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. I can already see that you have some challenges in front of you, and I wish you the very best of luck.

Recently, our Canadian athletes were very successful in the Pan Am Games, capturing 119 medals for fifth place in the overall medal race. I especially want to congratulate two of the participants from my riding and my hometown, attending Char-Lan high school in Williams-town.

While I don't want to take credit for their abilities, I had the privilege of watching them grow up and coaching them both. Christina Julien is a member of our women's gold medal soccer team, one of six players to score two goals during the tournament. Michael Robertson, a member of the Canada 4-by-400-metre relay team, finished fifth in the finals.

My riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is very proud of yet another of their many great achievements. Mr. Speaker, we have many great young kids across this province who are making a difference today and will be our leaders tomorrow.

CAT SCAN CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Mr. John Vanthof: On Saturday evening I had the pleasure to attend the CAT Scan Christmas concert at the Cobalt Classic Theatre. The entertainment was top-notch.

The purpose of the eighth annual concert is what sets it apart. Eight years ago, residents in my area had to travel four hours for a CT scan. The Timiskaming hospital had the capital to purchase a scanner, but the Ministry of Health would not approve the funding to operate it. So in true northern fashion, a committee was struck, a foundation was created and, three years later, the goal of \$2.3 million was reached. The CT scanner is now self-sustaining. Special thanks to the Frog's Breath Founda-

tion, Peter Grant, Three H manufacturing and many others.

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The result: 18,500 CT scans, 740,000 less kilometres on northern roads, and happier, healthier people.

Although this effort required the dedication of many, one couple deserves special recognition. Judy and Dr. P.J. Pace have and continue to be a driving force behind this incredible achievement.

SHERIDAN COLLEGE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past week, on November 30, I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of Sheridan College's Hazel McCallion campus in Mississauga. This state-of-the-art campus is designed and built to LEED gold standards, which is a rarity for post-secondary institutions.

The current capacity of this campus is 1,760 full-time students. This campus offers a range of programs such as accounting, finance, human resources, marketing, banking and wealth management. Our government's investment in the first phase amounted to \$31 million. The second phase of the campus is ready to move forward. Our government has committed to contribute \$60 million to increase its capacity to handle an additional 3,500 students.

This campus will benefit our youth, adults, seniors and newcomers and will create jobs in Mississauga. This is great news for Mississauga.

I would like to congratulate the current president of Sheridan, Dr. Zabudsky; former president Dr. Rob Turner; our mayor, Hazel McCallion; Team Sheridan; and all the residents of Mississauga.

MAGIC OF THE SEASON

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to extend congratulations to the children's aid society of Simcoe county foundation for their annual auction. This year, Magic of the Season raised over \$75,000 to support foster children with their post-secondary studies. The event was a huge success and brought many members of the community out to support the cause.

My wife, Joanne, and I co-chaired the festivities, and the talented Mr. Peter Biffis and Jeff Walters were the MC and auctioneer. Jane Kovarikova—my own legislative assistant—and Jeff Draper shared about the role of education in their lives as former youths in care. More than 200 people from Barrie and area came out to support the academic dreams of prospective students.

The night was kicked off by a generous \$25,000 endowment from Georgian College that would fully fund a foster child through their program of choice at the college. Thanks to Brian Tamblyn, the Georgian College president, for making this historic, powerful gesture. Thanks also to Susan Carmichael and Kimberly Carson with the children's aid society for organizing this major event.

Magic of the Season has represented something more than just a fundraiser. For the youth who will go on to study, it meant the possibility to realize their academic goals, to imagine a future that they direct, and to start a life as young adults with opportunities equal to their peers'. For these kids, the right to education is not just a right unto itself but in fact a right to equal opportunity.

Thank you again to everyone who keeps the foundation thriving from year to year and to all the people who came together to make the event the success that it was.

L'AMOREAUX COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I would like to acknowledge the students and staff at L'Amoreaux Collegiate Institute for hosting the launch of the partnership between the Toronto District School Board and the Stephen Lewis Foundation on World AIDS Day.

Over 33 million people in the world live with HIV, with most residing in sub-Saharan Africa, one of the poorest regions in the world. Through this partnership, the Toronto District School Board will be able to work with the Stephen Lewis Foundation to develop a curriculum resource and provide opportunities for students to learn about the impacts of HIV/AIDS.

This partnership was launched at L'Amoreaux Collegiate because the students at this school have been leaders in raising awareness on the AIDS epidemic. In the past, students have initiated ribbon campaigns. This year, students have designed a World AIDS Day T-shirt to raise funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which supports the front-line organizations in Africa combating the epidemic.

Recent numbers show that the incidence of HIV declined in 2010, yet much work needs to be done to reach the target goal of zero new infections. I am very proud that students in my riding at L'Amoreaux Collegiate are working very hard to do their part to make sure this goal becomes a reality.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My statement is directed to the Minister of Finance, and it concerns the transfer of pension assets for roughly 10,000 public sector employees affected by past divestments. Many of these employees are paramedics.

The Pension Benefits Amendment Act was supposed to fix the problem that arose when the government divested a wide array of services from one level of government to another in the mid-1990s. The government's own Expert Commission on Pensions highlighted the fact that many of these 10,000 employees continued to do the same job and in the same place of employment, but they were told that their future pension accruals would be in a different pension plan. This meant that their pension benefits would be significantly lower than they would have been if all of their service credits and associated pension assets had been transferred to their new plan.

To fix this unfair practice, the commission recommended in 2008 that the government should “promptly address the pension arrangements for groups of public service employees affected by past divestments and transfers.”

Three years after being told to promptly address the matter and 17 months after this House passed enabling legislation, the government has yet to introduce the regulations to fix this problem. The Minister of Finance told me in question period on March 30: “Those regulations will be promulgated shortly.” It has now been over eight months since the minister made those comments.

This holdup is affecting real people, many of whom live in my riding and all of whom are desperately trying to make plans to support their families in retirement. They can't wait any longer.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll reserve my statement for ministers' statements.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2011

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2011 (DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in certain residential buildings / Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment pour exiger

l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans certains immeubles d'habitation.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to require owners of residential buildings that contain a fuel-burning device or a storage garage to install carbon monoxide detectors in the building and to maintain them in operating condition. Currently, detectors are only required in homes built after August 6, 2001. The bill will also make it illegal to decommission a detector in the home.

The short title of the bill is the Hawkins Gignac Act, after a family from my riding of Oxford that was tragically killed due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE AND ELDERLY PEOPLE FROM ABUSE ACT (POWERS OF ATTORNEY), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES CONTRE LES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS (PROCURATIONS)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to powers of attorney / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui en ce qui a trait aux procurations.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. O'Toole moves that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to create the Twenty-First Century Skills Award for school pupils and that it now be read for the first time.

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

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): This is a bill entitled An Act to create the Twenty-First Century Skills Award for school pupils. First reading of the bill, première lecture, projet de loi.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill, of which I gave all copies to the table, does provide a framework for the establishment of a group here—there's been a slight mistake. I gave you the wrong bill. I have so many of them here to do. Actually, here it is here.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: How can you read the wrong one? You read the wrong one, then, Speaker.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. Stop the clock, because I'm taking way too much time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will re-put the question. Mr. O'Toole moves—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have too many one liners. I can't use them.

Mr. O'Toole moves that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to the powers of attorney and that it now be read for the first time.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you for the brief accommodation. The act amends the Public Guardian and Trustee Act to maintain a registry of those persons who are powers of attorney in the Substitute Decisions Act. This moves to protect frail elderly people who may be taken advantage of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. Further bills?

ESCAPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA FUITE FACE À LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to domestic violence / Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard de la violence familiale.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I am pleased to table the Escaping Domestic Violence Act on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to shorten the period of notice required to terminate a tenancy in cases where the tenant or a dependent child of the tenant is a victim of domestic violence.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE AGAINST PICKETING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES GENS VULNÉRABLES CONTRE LE PIQUETAGE

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to prevent picketing of supported group living residences / Projet de loi 23, Loi visant à empêcher le piquetage devant les résidences de groupe avec services de soutien.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My private member's bill is aimed at protecting the dignity of some of our province's most vulnerable people. Currently, in the event of a labour dispute, striking staff may picket at homes of supportive living residents. My bill would ensure that the homes of supported individuals cannot be picketed during times of labour dispute.

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2011 LOI DE 2011 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 24, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Essentially, what this bill is designed to do is require background checks for all those individuals working with youth in the province of Ontario to ensure that those individuals are essentially the ones that should be around kids.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2011 LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / Projet de loi 25, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I encourage the government to implement this bill to issue a non-refundable tax credit

for expenses incurred in the purchase of public transit and that they, by regulation, be given a tax credit when using public transit.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
SKILLS AWARD ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE PRIX
COMPÉTENCES POUR
LE 21^e SIÈCLE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to create the Twenty-First Century Skills Award for school pupils / Projet de loi 26, Loi créant le Prix Compétences pour le 21^e siècle pour les élèves.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The bill allows the Minister of Education to confer an award known as the Twenty-First Century Skills Award to one or more elementary school pupils and secondary school pupils, as well as their teachers, for implementing a set of skills that is recognized around the world as leadership skills.

MOTIONS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding the membership of standing committees and that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Is there unanimous consent to move the motion?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard some noes.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Agreed.
Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 10, 13, 14 and 15 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it agreed that the motion carry as is? Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further motions, it is now time for statements by ministries.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

RENT REGULATION

RÉGLEMENTATION DES LOYERS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I rise today in support of legislation to keep rental housing costs affordable and stable for tenants, both families and individuals, in Ontario.

Le 22 novembre, le Canada a célébré la Journée nationale de l'habitation. Cette journée nous rappelle, à toutes et à tous, de prendre conscience de l'importance du logement abordable et d'y réfléchir.

On November 22, Canada marked National Housing Day as a reminder for all of us to recognize and reflect on the importance of affordable housing. We know that access to affordable housing is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty, that access to affordable housing means that students will do better at school and that people will be healthier.

C'est la raison pour laquelle nous prenons des mesures aujourd'hui pour stabiliser le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

That's why today we're taking action to stabilize the rent increase guideline.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, the current formula for setting the annual rent increase guideline is based on the consumer price index, the CPI, which is calculated by Statistics Canada.

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For the most part, that has worked well for tenants and for landlords. The CPI is a fair and transparent way to calculate the guideline. However, last summer the average Ontario CPI over the previous 12 months was 3.1%. More than a 3% increase in rent is a significant hit for families and individuals struggling in these challenging economic times.

Monsieur le Président, plus tôt au cours de l'automne, le premier ministre s'est engagé à modifier la loi pour que l'augmentation tienne compte de la situation des locataires et pour qu'elle tienne compte de ce qui se produit dans la vraie vie pour les locataires.

Earlier this fall, the Premier committed to fixing the legislation so that the increase would be in line with what's happening for those who rent and in line for what's happening in the real world for tenants.

What is happening in the real world is best documented in a study that the United Way of Toronto released last January. The study, entitled Vertical Poverty, demonstrates the squeeze on incomes and rents for lower-income tenants. Almost half of the tenants interviewed for the United Way study said that they worry about paying the rent every month. One out of four tenants said that they do without things they need every month in order to pay the rent.

Monsieur le Président, nous avons pris un engagement et nous agissons maintenant rapidement pour modifier le mode de calcul du taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment, and now we're moving quickly on changes to the way the rent increase guideline is calculated.

The proposed amendment we are introducing today would ensure that, beginning in 2013, the rent increase guideline would be more stable and predictable. It would never go below 1% and would never be higher than two and a half per cent. We're also proposing that this formula be reviewed every four years to take into account the current situation at those times. The annual rent increase guideline will continue to be based on the consumer price index, which, as I've said, is a fair and transparent way to calculate the guideline.

Cette méthode permettrait de veiller à ce que les loyers restent abordables, réduirait la volatilité et accorderait une sécurité aux locataires et un rendement du capital investi aux locateurs pour qu'ils puissent entretenir comme il se doit leurs biens locatifs.

This approach would ensure that rents are affordable, would reduce volatility and provide certainty for tenants, while giving landlords a fair return so they can properly maintain their rental properties. By stabilizing the rent increase guideline, we'll help people find certainty in their housing costs, allowing them to focus on their jobs or education.

This amendment would fulfill an important goal of the government's poverty reduction strategy, and that is to keep housing costs affordable and stable. This proposed new rent increase guideline, along with other government programs, supports that principle.

Just a year ago, in fact, our government introduced the long-term affordable housing strategy, which is the first ever of its kind in Ontario, designed to make it easier for families and individuals to find and maintain affordable housing. That proposed legislation supports our strategy by giving families greater access to a range of affordable housing options.

Nous transformons le système de logement abordable pour qu'il mette directement l'accent sur les besoins de la population en reconnaissant que les collectivités ont des besoins différents en matière de logement.

We're transforming the affordable housing system to focus directly on the needs of people by recognizing that communities have different housing needs, depending on where they're located in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that housing is a basic need. Our government is committed to helping Ontario residents find safe, healthy, affordable places to call home. I look forward to the debate on this legislation, I look forward to input from across the House and I urge all members to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Response?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus to respond to the

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's introduction of her bill today to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

I have to tell you, I'm not so much disappointed by what this bill does as what it doesn't do. Frankly, Speaker, if you read it and look at the history of rent increases in this province over the last decade, you'll see that it won't change anything.

What I am disappointed about, however, is the fact this minister and this government believe that this piece of legislation is the priority right now. How can that be, Mr. Speaker, when it doesn't address some of the very serious issues that are facing both landlords and tenants across the province at the moment? If you gathered a few hundred of them together in a room, I'd be shocked if the way that this bill has been written in its present form seriously addresses some of those issues.

The bill will do nothing, Speaker, with all due respect, to create more affordable housing spaces. It will do nothing to assist local municipalities in coping with the mounting costs of operating their existing stock of affordable housing. Neither will it assist in opening up new rental units or encouraging landlords grappling with the crippling effect of the HST and the skyrocketing hydro and heating costs to stay in the business of renting out residential units.

The reality right now in Ontario is that landlords—it's a money-losing position, with costs of operating the units rising up to 6% every year. The bottom line is that despite the minister's best efforts to convince tenants that she's on their side, this bill will absolutely do nothing in terms of rent increases in Ontario because you have to look at the last decade. The average rate increase in Ontario was 2.1%, and over the past five the average increase was 1.7%. Those were the minister's own statistics this morning at our Coles Notes briefing on this bill. So you can see that over the last five and 10 years those increases have fallen between the floor and ceiling that she's proposing by this bill today.

But there's simply, I suggest, no pressing need for this legislation. So what's the point?

Well, Speaker, this bill was introduced today by the minister as her response to the one-year anomaly that we saw with rent increases going from 0.7% this year and the 3.1% increase for next year. Obviously, let's face it, that infuriated tenants' groups. They were mad at the government and this is their response. What the minister didn't tell you or those groups is the real reason why the rent increase guideline jumped so dramatically from one year to the next, but I know you're interested. I'll explain it to you.

The guideline, as the minister noted, is based on the Ontario consumer price index, and we all know it's this minister and the government's policies that caused the cost of living in Ontario to soar. The rent increase guideline has just spiked up with it. I had to chuckle during the briefing this morning when it was mentioned that it was a recent economic instability that caused the

CPI to soar, which resulted in the fluctuation of the guideline. Economic mismanagement—indeed, economic incompetence—would be a more accurate description, although I can see why the ministry chose to use the word “instability.” I can understand why they wanted to use that word. The “economic instability,” as it was so delicately put to me this morning, Mr. Speaker, I suggest is directly attributable to the McGuinty government’s decision to force the HST on Ontarians.

I have to give credit, though, to my predecessor in my capacity as the PC municipal affairs critic, the former member for Burlington, Joyce Savoline. She repeatedly warned the government that Ontario’s rental housing stock was deteriorating as a result of the implementation of the HST. She warned your government, your minister and your Premier, and you know what the response was? Have the landlords “absorb the cost of the HST.” That member was right, Mr. Speaker.

The bill this government introduced today is also a result of this government’s blind pursuit of costly energy experiments with complete disregard to the impact on hydro rates. If this government wants to do something to help landlords and tenants in Ontario, it can start by making the member for Algoma–Manitoulin’s Bill 4—bring it back here. It was approved by the majority of this House. Bring it back for third reading and that will help landlords and tenants in the province of Ontario.

Then after that, I suggest that you act on the Auditor General’s scathing report and end the feed-in tariff program that’s making electricity a luxury item in the province of Ontario. Stop making tenants absorb the cost of this government’s unbelievable policy of paying 20 times the going rate for power. That’s my suggestion to you, Minister, and I know deep down you agree.

Those are some of the real steps that we on this side of the House, that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party are calling for today to provide real relief for families, landlords and tenants.

1540

Unfortunately, this bill is yet another sign that this McGuinty government has lost its way and is out of touch with landlords and tenants in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the NDP caucus this afternoon. Action is needed to address the crisis in affordable housing across this province: 600,000 households live in overcrowded, substandard and unaffordable housing. One in five Ontario tenants pays more than half their income on rent.

According to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, 150,000 households are waiting for affordable housing, which is an increase of 7.5% over last year, and some families, like in Toronto, are waiting as long as 20 years.

The high cost of rent is the reason that 250,000 tenants used food banks in the last year. The government is not doing enough to address this crisis. It’s reducing the funding for affordable housing. According to the fall economic update, affordable homes and repairs has fallen

over 90%—a decrease of 90% over the last year, and the government plans to only build 1,000 new affordable houses over the next three years.

We will look carefully at the bill to determine the extent to which it will actually assist tenants, but on first look, it’s very limited; it’s a very narrow measure. It may reduce the fluctuations, but it isn’t clear that it will make rent more affordable for tenants. In fact, by continuing to link the annual rent increase guidelines to the CPI, it allows higher rent increases just when tenants are being hit with higher hydro, higher gas and higher food costs.

It also doesn’t fix the problems with rent controls. It doesn’t close the loophole in rent control that allowed landlords to propose exorbitant rent increases on tenants in the vacant units. It doesn’t protect the tenants from the guideline increases for utility costs. And it doesn’t establish a landlord licensing program to crack down on negligent landlords, to fix the issue of bedbugs and cockroaches in rental units across this city and in other parts of the province.

Housing groups have called for these and other reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act, which I’m sure we’ll hear about as this bill moves through the committee. My colleague from Parkdale–High Park introduced a private member’s bill earlier this year which included these and other measures. Unfortunately, that bill did not become law. So we need to be working together to make sure that this government bill makes the substantive changes needed to make rent more affordable and to better protect the rights of tenants in Ontario, because Ontarians deserve no less.

In my own area of Niagara, The Hope Centre in the city of Welland supported about 700 individuals in 2009, allowing them to be able to retain their housing—so just in one city in my riding, 700 tenants. Open Door Concepts, which I spoke about in my member’s statement last week or the week before, supported 40 individuals, to help retain them in their housing. The emergency hostel service in my riding, called The Hope House, provided 6,623 nights of beds and safety for residents in the city of Welland and across the Niagara region.

The wait-list here in the Niagara peninsula—although it may be up to 20 years in Toronto—can be as high as four to seven years in the region of Niagara.

In the city of Welland: 27% of the population in my city actually rents, and so this bill certainly won’t assist them in paying 50% of their income towards rent. The median income in Welland after taxes is only \$22,920. If people have to pay \$10,000 of their income towards rent, there is a problem with feeding families and looking after your children.

The percentage of the population that lives in low income in the city of Welland is 10.2%, so there are a lot of people who need a lot more measures than this bill is going to give them, but I look forward to some further debate on the issue. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the minister for her statement and the members for their responses.

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE
AND ACTION ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
JOURNÉE NATIONALE
DE COMMÉMORATION ET D'ACTION
CONTRE LA VIOLENCE
FAITE AUX FEMMES

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, after which the House will observe a moment of silence.

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

Minister of Education and Women's Issues.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker. Today, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we honour the 14 female engineering students whose lives were tragically cut short at École Polytechnique de Montréal.

We must never forget that the horrible events of December 6, 1989, were caused by gender discrimination. The acts of that day, 22 years ago, are a stark reminder of one terrible fact: Women are at risk of violence simply because they are women.

Monsieur le Président, j'avais à peu près le même âge que ces femmes lorsqu'elles sont mortes. Cette tragédie nous a changés en tant que génération, en tant que femmes et en tant que société.

Mr. Speaker, I was about the same age as these women when they died. This tragedy changed us as a generation, as women and as a society. This tragedy pointed then and still does to the inequality that is at the root of violence against women. Whether it is the sexual exploitation of women through human trafficking or the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada, we see that inequality in all of its forms reinforces violence against women.

The rose button we wear today signifies a commitment to never condone or remain silent about violence against women. It is a symbol that we will continue to work to eliminate the gap in equality between men and women.

Le bouton de rose que nous portons aujourd'hui témoigne de notre engagement à ne jamais approuver ou rester silencieux quand il est question de violence à l'égard des femmes.

We can make a difference as individuals; it starts with each of us asking ourselves, "What can I do?" Equality grows with each of our efforts. Let's teach our boys and girls to value each other as equals and to demonstrate respect. As adults, we can lead by example. As minister responsible for women's issues, I am working to ensure that women live without fear of violence at home, at work or in their communities, and I was proud to work with our partners to develop the sexual violence action plan.

Speaker, one third of women are victims of sexual violence. That is a startling figure. In most cases, the woman is acquainted with her attacker. The sexual violence action plan is working to improve services for victims of sexual violence and to help them heal.

As Minister of Education, I'm proud that we've recently introduced the Accepting Schools Act to make Ontario schools inclusive places where all kids feel safe, welcome and respected.

Speaker, almost 30% of high school girls report unwanted sexual attention, and we know that kids can't learn when they don't feel safe. Our goal has to be nothing short of ending violence against women and of ending the fundamental inequality at the heart of gender discrimination.

As leaders, we can ensure that all girls have equal access to all benefits of society: to grow up, to go to school and reach their potential. We can ensure that all girls in this province have the opportunity to learn in an environment where they are safe and respected.

As a woman who felt the tragedy at École Polytechnique de Montréal so personally, I want to ensure that this date is always remembered and always serves to mobilize us. Change happens, one person at a time, and each of us has a role.

Mr. Speaker, November 25 was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. We wore a white ribbon to recognize the role men can play in ending violence against women. The day began the internationally sanctioned 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, which continues through to December 10.

Today, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, I ask all members to join. By wearing this rose, we remember the women whose lives have been cut short by violence, including those who died in Montreal on December 6, 1989, and we remember women everywhere who suffer, often in silence, from abuse just because they are women.

1550

Mr. Speaker, let us take a moment to remember the 14 women who tragically lost their lives 22 years ago: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, age 23; Nathalie Croteau, age 23; Barbara Daigneault, age 22; Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 27; Sonia Pelletier, age 23; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; and Annie Turcotte, age 21.

Souvenons-nous de leur famille et de leurs amis. Souvenons-nous des personnes qui connaissent le mieux leur sourire et leur rire. Et souvenons-nous des personnes qu'elles aimaient et qui ressentent tous les jours leur disparition.

Let us remember their families and friends. Let's remember those who knew their smiles and their laughter best, and let's remember those who knew their love and still feel their loss every single day.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus on this, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

It was on this day in 1989 that a lone gunman killed 14 young women and wounded 14 others at Montreal's École Polytechnique. He separated male and female students and ordered male students and teachers out of the room. He then proclaimed his hatred for feminists, whom he claimed had ruined his life.

These women weren't militant feminists; they were intelligent young women who were advancing their education in order to become professional engineers. They were targeted because of the sole fact they were the wrong gender. This single event, which is known around the world as the Montreal massacre, did more to raise the awareness across Canada of the tragedy and senselessness of violence against women than any other event to date. Memorials have been erected across the country and the anniversary is commemorated each year in the media, schools, governments, private organizations, and by countless individuals who shared the pain of that day.

In my own riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, a vigil was held this morning on the Lindsay campus of Fleming College. This event also served as the opportunity for the presentation by the YWCA of Guardian Angel Awards to the women in the community who provide invaluable assistance to women in crisis.

Every day we watch news reports of honour killings, depressed husbands who kill their spouses, boyfriends attacking girlfriends, and on and on. There is a mountain of evidence showing that if a young male grows up in a family environment where women are disrespected and abused, odds are that he will develop similar views towards women as he matures, yet every second a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence. Over 86% of all criminal sexual assaults in Canada are against women. Over 29% of Canadian women have been assaulted by a spouse, with 45% suffering serious physical injury. Worst of all, sexual assaults usually occur at the hands of someone in a position of trust. When you look at statistics like that, how can we claim that we are truly an advanced civilization?

The problem of violence against women can be compounded in non-urban areas where isolation and transportation can worsen the situation. However, many communities are coming together to fight this problem. The YWCA in Haliburton county, for example, provides both short- and long-term counselling, as well as temporary emergency accommodation for women in abusive situations. Women's Resources in the city of Kawartha Lakes also provides counselling and public education programs, including the growing risks associated with technology and Internet safety. Cellphones with a built-in GPS can be a blessing but can also make some women who are fleeing an abusive spouse more vulnerable.

The city of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton county are collaborating with many community agencies on the

development of a poverty reduction strategy to deal with some of the underlying social problems that put women at risk.

As a nurse, I know that we need to treat the fundamental underlying causes of a disease and not just the symptoms. You can treat a patient for a heart attack, but you need to address all of the other factors that contributed to it: blood pressure, cholesterol, diet, exercise, obesity. Dealing with a societal disease is no different. Certainly, perpetrators of violence against women should be punished, and the victims need to be taken care of and their needs addressed.

However, this is addressing the problem after the fact. We need to do more to stop the violence in the first place. We cannot turn a blind eye when we see female friends, relatives, associates or co-workers being victimized. Men need to be role models for their sons in terms of respect for women and intolerance to violence. It is worth noting that the White Ribbon Campaign was actually started by a group of men in London, Ontario. The cause of ending domestic violence and sexual violence needs to be embraced by all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the PC caucus to mark this solemn occasion.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You know that horrible, horrible day when Marc Lépine walked into that engineering school and opened fire on women in 1989, he used words to the effect of "You're all a bunch of feminists." Mr. Speaker, I've always been a feminist since I can remember, and I'm proud to stand on behalf of New Democrats, who are a bunch of feminists, and our leader, Andrea Horwath—also a feminist—to speak about this awful day and what we can do to make sure it's never repeated.

It's interesting that 1989 was exactly 60 years after women were first declared human persons in this country. Any woman here whose mother was born before that would be the first woman in their family to be considered a human person. Before that date, they were the property of their husband or their fathers, property, not persons before that date—60 years later.

I remember the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. These were struggles, for example, against want ads in the Toronto papers that used to say, "Help wanted, male," "Help wanted, female." They were struggles against women getting fired because they were pregnant—again, common practice. They were struggles to get the word "sex" into the Ontario Human Rights Code. We're struggling again now to get gender identity into that same Ontario Human Rights Code on behalf of our trans sisters—struggles continue, 60 years of struggles around women's issues.

On that day, what Marc Lépine in essence said was that this was a threat to him. It was a threat to him, women's equality.

Looking forward to the next—I hope not 60 years; I hope that this comes a lot quicker—we look at the

struggles that are not complete for women, the struggles that will give women more strength and independence, economic independence, which is what they need to be able to leave abusive situations.

So we look at things like affordable and accessible daycare. We still don't have that in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker; we're not close to having that. That's something I've been struggling for since the 1960s: free and accessible daycare.

We also need fully funded women's shelters, shelters that don't spend most of their time writing grant proposals but actually spend most of their time looking after the women who come to see them and have enough beds in those shelters to be able to accommodate the women who come to see them.

We need to have a society in Ontario where women do not make only 71 cents for every dollar that a man makes, because if you can't afford to take care of your children and yourself on one salary, then you can't afford to be economically independent, and then you get stuck in abusive situations. Certainly, that's what's happening to women.

Women, by and large, are the measure of poverty in this province and across this country: 60% of our senior women live in poverty—60% of our senior women. Most families that are waiting on those affordable housing lists that you heard about earlier are single-headed families, and they're headed by women. Children are the recipients of that poverty and that tradition of poverty. Again, traditions of abuse are passed on from generation to generation to generation.

Signs of hope in this place: There is a sign of hope. Last Parliament I tabled a motion for an all-women committee to look in particular at the roots of violence against women. I know there have been very encouraging signs in this minority Parliament from all parties that we get together as women, an all-party committee of women to look at women's issues. I think we could get a lot done on that committee, Mr. Speaker, and I know that we're going to move forward with that. I've heard encouraging signs. That's an encouraging sign.

1600

Yes, the White Ribbon Campaign: an encouraging sign, started by our own Jack Layton, I'm proud to say, and other men of like minds. An encouraging sign: Ruth's Daughters, something that was started right here, that looks at faith communities and asks faith communities to take an active role in raising awareness about violence against women.

There are lots of encouraging signs, but there's a long, long way to go. I don't want to wait another 60 years. I don't want to wait for another tragedy, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to wait for another Marc Lépine. I want this done, and done for our children and certainly done for our grandchildren; that's what I want. That's what we want, we bunch of feminists in the NDP, with Andrea Horwath.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As in the motion, it is my request that all members and all guests in the

House please rise for a moment of silence to honour the memory of the victims of the Montreal massacre and their families.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for that moment. I want to thank all the members for their statements today on that issue.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

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 this petition. Thank you.

JOB RELOCATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government is moving 10,000 jobs from the downtown of our city of Ottawa to Kanata;

"Whereas about half of those people live in Orléans;

"Whereas the commutes up to these jobs will be over one hour for Orléans commuters, compared to 20 minutes to the present DND offices downtown;

"Whereas this action by the Harper government will make our city less sustainable;

"Whereas Orléans has only 0.5 jobs per household, compared to 1.65 jobs per household in Kanata;

"Whereas this action runs counter to the city of Ottawa's official plan by promoting urban sprawl as opposed to densification;

"Whereas the overall costs of this move of 10,000 jobs to Kanata have never been fully costed;

"Whereas no environmental assessment or consultation was carried out with the affected communities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the assembly of Ontario to request that the Legislature evaluate the actions of the federal government to see if the environmental assessment legislation of the federal and provincial governments was followed; and

“Furthermore, that the Legislature investigate the total cost of a purely political decision by the federal government.”

I will put my signature to this and send it up with Mobarrat.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: “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 will sign it.

TRANSFERT D’EMPLOIS

M. Phil McNeely: « Pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral transfère 10 000 emplois du centre-ville d’Ottawa vers Kanata;

« Attendu que plus de la moitié de ces employés demeurent à Orléans;

« Attendu que le temps de déplacement vers ces emplois prendra plus d’une heure pour les résidents d’Orléans plutôt que les 20 minutes actuellement nécessaires pour se rendre aux édifices du centre-ville;

« Attendu que cette action du gouvernement Harper fera de notre ville une ville moins viable;

« Attendu qu’Orléans n’a qu’un ratio de 0,5 emploi par foyer, contrairement à 1,65 par foyer à Kanata;

« Attendu que cette décision va à l’encontre du plan officiel de la ville d’Ottawa en prônant l’étalement urbain plutôt que la densification;

« Attendu que les coûts totaux du transfert de ces 10 000 emplois vers Kanata n’ont jamais été évalués;

« Attendu qu’aucune évaluation environnementale ou consultation n’a été faite au sein de la communauté concernée;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que la législature de l’Ontario évalue les actions du gouvernement fédéral pour regarder si l’évaluation environnementale de la législature fédérale et provinciale a été suivie et aussi que la législature provinciale analyse le coût total de cette décision purement politique prise par le gouvernement fédéral. »

Et moi, je vais signer la pétition et l’envoyer avec Carolyn.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: The signatures have been gathered by Nichols Gravel Ltd.

Titled, “Nichols Gravel Ltd., Petition for Justice and MNR Compliance to OMB and ARA Legislation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas officials of MNR Aylmer district illegally imposed on licence 103717 without legislative or delegated authority preconditions to be completed prior to operation of the quarry which in fact were impossible to complete without quarry operations, and then used ARA legislation to revoke the licence for non-compliance, when to this date no ‘operational licence’ has yet been delivered to Nichols Gravel Ltd. under direction of OMB order 1194;

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

“For an order to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Attorney General to comply with OMB Act s. 86(1); Superior Court judgment order 148/07, July 23, 2007; to OMB order 1194; the Aggregate Resources Act; and the June 15, 2006, judicially reviewed declaratory order to attachment (A) as to conditions of licence 103717, to which the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of the Attorney General and Ontario Legislature remain in contempt of court for failure to respond directly to a petition of April 21, 2009 (p. 231), in order to resolve this problem;

“And a further order of request to the RCMP for an investigation of these two ministries for conspiracy, abuse of process, abuse of discretionary authority and negligent misrepresentation to the continued enforcement to revoke licence 103717 based upon preconditions not in the OMB order and not in the licence, and conspired to restrict competition over the past eight years, contrary to the federal Combines Act, s. 45(c).”

Reference: injusticecanada.com/miscarriageofjustice, series 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

I sign this petition.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

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

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

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

“To stop the development of the Melancthon quarry.”

1610

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: “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..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.”

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: I also support the petition on the Melancthon quarry and I want to add my name to that petition. But yesterday, the Auditor General of Ontario issued a very scathing report—

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

Mr. John O’Toole: This petition has to do with that. The petition reads as follows:

“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”—failed—“has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils,” including mine, “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 am pleased to support this, as was moved by our member Todd Smith last week.

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with 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.”

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Energy Farming Ontario Inc., Settlers Landing Wind Park LP and/or Snowy Ridge Wind Park LP are proposing to construct 10 wind turbines within the city of Kawartha Lakes in order to produce up to 20 megawatts of power (the proposed wind parks); and

“Whereas the proposed wind parks will adversely affect wildlife populations, wildlife migration patterns, human health and the natural environment; and

“Whereas the proposed wind parks are to be located, in whole or in part, on the Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the location of the proposed wind parks is not in keeping with the Ontario government’s vision for the Oak Ridges moraine, which is the protection of the ‘ecological features and functions that support the health and well-being of the region’s residents and ecosystems’;

“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 regulations based on science and local planning.”

This is signed by hundreds of people from my riding.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I too have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“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.”

Speaker, I support the petition, affix my name and send it to the table with Bernadette.

LYME DISEASE

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature, and send it to the table with page Ashley.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2011, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, these are very tough times for families, as you and everyone in this chamber is well aware. People need help. They’ve had a tough time in recent years.

Between September 2008 and May 2009, a quarter of a million Ontarians lost their jobs. The real gross domestic product plummeted three percentage points. The unemployment rate in centres like Windsor and Oshawa spiked well into the double digits; Toronto wasn’t very far behind. The recovery that we’ve seen in this province has been uneven and unreliable, and while many are forecasting growth for next year, frankly, Madam Speaker, they’re not willing to bet their house on

it or this House on it. It's been a rough ride for everyone. Middle-income households that were already feeling the squeeze are now simply falling behind.

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Recent surveys have found that half of Canadians have experienced a deterioration of their financial situation over the past year and 60% of families live paycheque to paycheque. I have to say to you, Speaker, as I go door to door in my riding and talk to families, as I talk to seniors, as I talk to people who are currently unemployed and desperately looking for work, they feel that squeeze every day. They're constantly caught with the anxiety of, how will they pay the rent? How will they pay the mortgage? How will they make sure that there's food on the table? Will their job be there in the days, weeks and years to come? Will they be able to get a job, if they don't have one right now?

Ontario's consumer confidence index remains the lowest of all the provinces. Ontarians have the highest job anxiety levels in all of Canada. That's quite something to say for the province that was the economic powerhouse of this country, the province that was the engine of growth for Canada. Now we're in a situation, under the jurisdiction of this Liberal government, to have fallen so far and to have put so many people into such great difficulty.

One out of every four people will say, when surveyed, that they or someone in their household is worried about losing their job. We can't succeed as a province if people believe that they're falling behind. People who are worried about making ends meet don't buy homes; people who think things won't get better won't upgrade their skills.

There's a growing concern from economists that household debt and economic insecurity is becoming a drag on our whole economy, and how could it help but be a drag on our economy when people don't have money to spend, when they're worried about spending what they do have. Obviously they don't go into stores, they don't buy goods, and when they buy goods, they buy at the lowest price that they can find, not necessarily the goods that are going to meet their needs but simply the ones that they can afford or that they feel comfortable about.

If our economy is going to work, then families need to be looking to the future with confidence. The question for all of us in this Legislature and in this province is, how do we confront these challenges? We need to be innovative in our thinking and not put blind faith in ideology and tired ideas. We need to recognize that the private sector will create jobs but that government has a key role to play. And we need to put the people of this province and their economic well-being at the heart of our plan. If the people of Ontario are financially secure, the economy of Ontario will prosper; if not, the economy of the province falls back.

Having said all that, Madam Speaker, there's no question in my mind that the priorities of this Liberal government have to change. We continue to get the same old ideas. Since the recession, we've had Stephen Harper

in Ottawa and Dalton McGuinty in Ontario putting forward the same solution: another round of corporate tax giveaways, corporate tax cuts. Not only do corporations get tax cuts, but families and individuals in this province have to deal with the social service cuts that come with them.

In the next two years, this government plans to spend \$600 million on corporate tax cuts—\$600 million, Madam Speaker—and a few years later, over \$1 billion a year on a scheme to let Ontario's biggest corporations write off taxes on expenses like entertainment. So if you've got a private box at the Rogers Centre, you get to write it off. Madam Speaker, does that make sense to you? Does that make sense to families in this province who are trying to hold things together, trying to pay their mortgages, trying to pay for child care fees, trying to support their parents? Absolutely not, Speaker. This is not justifiable, but this is the strategy that the McGuinty government is putting forward. That is a misplaced priority.

We now have one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the world, Madam Speaker, and record high household debt and record highs of unemployment and people who are falling behind. These things are tightly associated. If you have record low corporate tax rates, if all the funds flow to the top 1% of the population, then obviously the rest of the population doesn't have the money to spend on goods and services, doesn't have the wherewithal to actually make the economy roll.

This major direction of the Liberal government is undermining our economy. It will mean, Madam Speaker, that we will be closing emergency rooms, standing by while child care centres shutter their doors, and watching in city after city as transit fares rise or bus lines are cut. This policy on the part of this government, the Liberal government, is a loser for Ontario.

Interestingly, some in this House may say, "Well, that's the NDP going on at length about corporate taxes. What would you expect? That's their bias." Some may say that. Some in benches near to me might say that; some in benches distant from me might say that. But I want to just bring to your attention and to the attention of the people in this House an article written in that well-known and not necessarily left-wing publication, the *Globe and Mail*, in April of this year. The headline—and I really enjoyed the headline—"Corporate Tax Cuts Don't Spur Growth; Designed as Economic Stimulators and Job Creators, They're Going to Cash Reserves Instead, Analysis Shows."

Okay, so it's not the *Toronto Sun* who-won-the-hockey-game headline, but it's still pretty catchy if you care about the economy.

Karen Howlett wrote this article, and she started off with a really good observation: "Canadian companies have added tens of billions of dollars to their stockpiles of cash at a time when tax cuts are supposed to be encouraging them to plow more money into their businesses."

Madam Speaker, the rest of the article is really good, but really, frankly, that paragraph summarizes it. I'll give

a bit more detail, but when we give corporate tax cuts, we are simply transferring wealth from the vast majority of people in Ontario to a small, extraordinarily powerful and wealthy elite. They can't spend it all here. They can't just simply dispose of it all. They spread it through all of their interests across the country and around the world. That means that there's less effective spending power in Ontario's economy. It means that families that we represent and depend on for their political support, and who depend on our political support on a daily basis, don't have the money to get on with their lives because all of it is being taken by this giant vacuum cleaner into a few bank accounts, held—not deployed usefully to build our economy, not invested to build our factories, our offices, expand our farm operations, expand our food processors. No, Madam Speaker, the money is held tightly and closely, and it is extracted from us, extracted from our economy, and is not used to really make things roll forward.

Karen Howlett observed at the time, “Corporate tax cuts are becoming a major issue in the federal election campaign”—obviously, because the Harper government were promoting them so heavily at the federal level. This Liberal government here in Ontario promoted them heavily as well. Their inner Tory came out when they brought forward this policy.

The Globe reports: “But an analysis of Statistics Canada figures by the Globe and Mail reveals that the rate of investment in machinery and equipment has declined in lockstep with falling corporate tax rates over the past decade. At the same time, the analysis shows, businesses have added \$83 billion to their cash reserves since the onset of the recession in 2008.”

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I want to tell you right now that the people I represent have not seen their cash reserves bumped up since that recession. They have seen their money depleted to pay for their bills. They have seen the necessity of putting more money out to make sure that their families are stable and that their parents and grandparents are looked after. Madam Speaker, corporate tax cuts have meant that there has been an increasing concentration of wealth at the very top and an undermining of the economy that all of us depend on.

The Globe and Mail: Karen Howlett, writing for them, goes on to say that there's a lot of debate between economists about the role of the different factors that make for building an economy. She writes, “There are no easy answers when it comes to measuring the impact tax rates have on job creation. Economic growth in Canada can be attributed to a lot more than just corporate tax rates. Such things as commodity prices and the value of the Canadian dollar also play a role.

“The issue boils down to this: At a time when Ottawa and many provinces are awash in deficit, should governments invest scarce resources in making life more affordable for families by enhancing social programs or in giving corporations additional tax cuts?”

Well, that may be one of the central questions that we face in this country and in this province at this time.

Where should the money flow to? Where should the money flow to? I have to say that this Liberal government has decided that it needs to flow uphill to those who have the most and not across the landscape to the broad middle class, to people on low incomes, to those who are poor, who need those services and that income. Because they are suffering, the businesses and entrepreneurs that depend on them are suffering as well.

Speaker, the Globe and Mail goes on to say, “Successive federal governments have chosen the latter path”—the latter path of corporate tax cuts—“in recent years in a bid to make Canada more competitive and attractive to international investors. In 2000, the combined federal-provincial tax rate was just over 42 per cent, ranking Canada near the top among industrialized nations. The combined rate has since fallen to 28 per cent, placing the country in the middle of the pack, and Conservative leader Stephen Harper's goal is to reduce it to 25 per cent by fiscal 2013.”

The reality, though, Speaker, is that in this past decade, as the Globe writes, investment in equipment and machinery has fallen as a share of Canada's total economic output. We see ongoing declines in business investment the more money we shovel out the door.

Speaker, that has a huge impact on the day-to-day lives of families in this province and frankly has not built our economy; it has damaged our economy. So if people are wondering why it is that we aren't able to sustain a recovery, I say it's because there's less and less money available to people on a daily basis.

One thing I'll note, not a Canadian example, a Brazilian example: The Workers' Party in Brazil came to power a number of years ago. One of their commitments was to reduce poverty in that country. As you well know, poverty in Brazil has been extreme, especially in the northeast. The Workers' Party in Brazil set up a system of mothers' allowances and cash supports to the poorest in Brazil. One of the things that happened, not predicted by the Workers' Party or anyone, was that those areas that had been historically totally done in economically, where there were no opportunities—suddenly, businesses were coming to life because people had some money in their pockets.

In Brazil, there was some growth in the economy. But the real reason that the poor had money in their pockets was that there was less going to the wealthiest and more to the poorest—and that built the middle class and the small business class, as well as helping the poor.

Speaker, there's something to learn, not only from the statistics that the Globe and Mail is willing to print, speak about and inform us about, but also the experience of other countries where, in fact, the income goes to the middle class, to the poor, and that builds a base for an economy that can thrive.

Murray Dobbin, a political commentator, writes about this issue as well. He talked about why it is that corporations benefit from actually paying their fair share of taxes: Because the reality is, if you want to run a factory or a business in a modern economy, you don't do it in a

vacuum. You don't do it on an island out in the lake with no connections. You need roads, you need infrastructure, you need health care, you need training; you need a wide variety of investments so that you, in fact, can be profitable.

Murray Dobbin writes about the deficit in investment in infrastructure that comes about because there's a cut in the income to central governments. He talks about the infrastructure deficit and the crumbling of municipal services like sewer and water, roads and bridges and our ports. Businesses depend on these elements at least as much as all the rest of the citizens who live in our cities.

He writes that we hear at length about the need for Canada to be globally competitive, but frankly, Mr. Speaker, have we actually seen the investments that would make us competitive? Let's just take the greater Toronto area. People in this room have heard before that the cost of congestion in the GTA, and probably the whole of the greater Golden Horseshoe, is about \$6 billion per year. Where is the money in transit and electrified rail to break that logjam? Because companies have had their taxes cut, the money has not been there to provide rapid transit, and thus the money they save on one hand, they're spending on the other in greater expenses to simply make goods and people move through one of the central economic areas in this province.

Speaker, if we want to deal with the deficit that we face—and we do want to deal with it, because we don't want to be spending so much of our income on interest—and if we want to deal with a trained workforce and an education system that's high quality, sustainable, one that we can depend on, we can't afford this ongoing shift of wealth from the majority to a very small minority. We can't afford these irresponsible, across-the-board corporate tax cuts. This government has to recognize that it's going down the wrong road. It has to recognize that if we're going to have an Ontario that is wealthy and proud in the decades to come, we have to have a fair tax system, and these corporate tax cuts—the ones that have been put in place recently and the ones that are scheduled to come soon—have to be set aside.

Speaker, this government needs to rethink its strategy and that rethink has to be reflected in its budget next year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I recognize the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the opportunity to rise again, and thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for your comments with respect to the speech.

Speaker, these are challenging times, and that's why our government and the throne speech are focused on strengthening our economy, creating jobs, educating our youth and protecting our health care. These are our priorities and they will continue to be our priorities.

I had the privilege this weekend to attend a number of events in my riding and spoke to many who appreciate our priorities and want us to continue to move forward.

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You want to know a community that has seen challenges? Come to Windsor. I am proud of the support our government has provided to my community. If it wasn't for corporate support to our auto companies, I dread to think of how much worse our challenges would have been. So thank you for that corporate support.

I have seen first-hand the benefits and advantages of supporting our employers. I had the privilege this morning of attending the grand opening of CS Wind. I spoke to many of the employees there who, at this time last year, were unemployed and now are gainfully employed and trained.

As the former director of employment and social services, I am keenly aware of where Windsor was eight years ago and where they are at today. I have seen the investments the government has made for our families and the enhancements to the programs and services available.

It is the balance between services for our families and supports to our employers that will continue to make Ontario the best place in the world to live and the best place for investments. Thank you.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, it sounds like the member from Toronto–Danforth is going to vote against the speech from the throne. I can see why, after reading the Auditor General's report yesterday and attending in the media gallery and listening first-hand to what the Auditor General had to say, where he refuted pretty much every basic tenet of the government's plan.

I want to talk about some of the things that he said that I took notes on and where I can quote him. He talked about the fact that the wind and solar FIT program—(a) none of these can be connected to the grid; they're built in places that they roll them out quickly and without proper attention; they're built in places that don't have transmission lines; (b) he said that it looks like we don't need the capacity anyway, and of course he's referring to the Financial Post article last Friday that showed how we lost another \$420 million in selling surplus energy; and (c) he said that wind and solar are not reliable, which is why the other forms of generation serve as a backup.

He also talked about the fact that the 30,000 jobs are short-term, Speaker. He also mentioned the fact that in other jurisdictions the cost per green energy job is \$300,000, and for each job created, two to four are lost in other sectors. Some may be surprised at that statistic, but Speaker, living in northern Ontario, I can tell you we watched with anguish as Timmins lost 787 employees this March at Xstrata because of the FIT program and the high energy costs throughout Ontario and especially in northern Ontario, as they moved across the border into Quebec for cheaper energy.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: As I listened to the presentation, I was very impressed with the member from Toronto–Danforth for some of the good points he brought forward.

One of his main points, of course, was job losses. I'd just look to touch on some of the things that have been going on.

The Liberal government has stood up for the last four years and bragged about how much is going on in the manufacturing sector. I recall them standing up many times and promoting the 300,000 jobs they were going to create in manufacturing and the 50,000 jobs in green energy. That didn't happen, Mr. Speaker, and it's not going to happen.

In the greater Hamilton area, since 2003 when this government took over, we've lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs, good-paying jobs. That probably would impact on at least four or five people in a family, so that's about 25% of our population that has been affected by job loss.

Just some of the major companies that have pulled out, Mr. Speaker: Proctor & Gamble, Westinghouse, Massey Ferguson, Otis Elevator, American Can, Dominion Glass, John Inglis—the list goes on and on. We just had two companies pull out recently, with 350 good jobs pulled out of Hamilton and moved down to southwestern Ontario with 100 jobs, and they're paying a lot less than they did in Hamilton.

We've got all kinds of manufacturing facilities empty. When I started in 1975 at Stelco, we had, I believe, 13,000 hourly employees and about 6,000 salaried employees, for a total of 20,000 people in Hilton Works. You'd be lucky if there are 900 people there now. I remember going to work, and I had trouble getting a parking spot. I could fire a cannon down there and wouldn't hit anybody right now. If you drive down Burlington Street in Hamilton, it's a wasteland. So when this government talks about all the jobs it's creating, I think it's a bit of a stretch, to say the least. Until they start bringing good manufacturing jobs back to this province and really promoting our province and bringing good jobs back, then you'll see a difference, Mr. Speaker, but it's not happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Ms. Soo Wong: I listened attentively to the opposition members from Toronto–Danforth, Nipissing, Hamilton East and Windsor West, and I, too, am as concerned about job creation and job loss, but I want to share with you, as the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, that I have spoken to many of our seniors and many of the residents about this government. They voted for this Liberal government because they trust and have confidence in this government to provide stability, and a sustainable economy for our community.

Last month, Statistics Canada very clearly showed this province, by this Liberal government, has created the most jobs than anywhere else in Canada. So unless Statistics Canada is wrong and reported incorrectly, this government is on the right track.

At the end of the day, you can argue the number is incorrect, you can argue that the number from Statistics Canada is incorrect, but this government in the throne

speech is very clear in its commitment to growth and a commitment to clean energy and green jobs.

At the end of the day, this commitment is clearly listed and recorded in the throne speech. As a member, I fully support what is written in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, unless Statistics Canada is incorrect, we are committed to this job creation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Windsor West, Scarborough–Agincourt, Nipissing and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for their commentary.

Member from Scarborough–Agincourt, it's good to be in a Legislature with you again. People may not know, but the member was a school trustee in my riding back in the 1990s when I was a city councillor. So it's interesting our paths cross in this way.

To you, member from Windsor West, we all want to protect health care. We know that there are industries that will need support from government sources, but I say to you right now, indiscriminate across-the-board corporate tax cuts reduce overall business investment, reduce the ability for us to provide services like health care and child care, increase our deficit and, in the end, undermine the business atmosphere, the economic atmosphere that you want to have to make sure that we do have jobs. I know that you're going to have to work through on that. There's a big difference between investing in a point industry to make sure it survives and giving banks that are making a fortune big chunks of money so that they can have even more stuffed in the vault.

The member from Nipissing: Interestingly, I noticed Xstrata. Anyone who's in this Legislature noticed Xstrata. As you would be well aware, the amount of renewable power in the system is very small. Most of what's driven cost increases in last decade has been privatization and increased investment in nuclear. TransCanada Pipelines was reporting a 10% return on its investment at Bruce Nuclear even though there was something in the range of a \$2-billion overrun on that investment.

I tell you, if you're a company that can sustain a \$2-billion overrun and still have a 10% return on your equity, somebody's giving you a really sweet bailout: this government.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. At the outset I'll let you know that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the member from Mississauga–Brampton South.

Today, we'll be hearing from all the parties on the speech from the throne that was delivered Tuesday, November 22 this year. What I think people around Ontario, those people who came to the chambers that day—they were looking to the province, to the government and to the opposition parties for a plan that was

going to get us through some pretty serious times that we're facing in the global economy.

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I think any one of us from any one of the parties today can turn on the TV, can go online, can certainly listen to your Twitter account or anywhere, and you'll hear about issues that are developing, in an economic sense, all over the globe. These days we're hearing an awful lot of bad news that's coming out of Europe. Today we're hearing some, I think, politically good news about how the leaders are proposing to address some of the problems that the European community is facing. But certainly, I think when we look to our neighbours to the south as well, our biggest trading partner, we see that they've gone through some challenges in the recent past economically, and they aren't recovering as quickly as we hoped they would.

I think that people in Ontario judge themselves relative to what is happening around the world, and what they expect out of this government and, I think, out of the opposition parties, is input to a plan that's going to see us through some economic tough times, bring us out of the recession that we've been in and bring us out of some of the economic tough times stronger than when we went into it. I think each of us looks to our own community to ensure that the people that we're obligated to represent as a result of our election to this place—we look to those people, I think, as a barometer as to how our own communities are doing, how the rest of the province is doing and how our economy is doing in a much broader sense.

When I look to my own community of Oakville, which isn't far from yours, Speaker, we've got four new hospitals within driving distance of my house, for example. We've got two in the MPP for Halton's riding, Mr. Chudleigh's riding; we've got the Oakville hospital; and we've got the Milton hospital now; it's been announced that that's being built. If we go to Burlington, if we go to the newly elected member from Burlington's riding, Joe Brant has been after a new hospital there, or for redevelopment, for a long, long time. That was also announced. And of course, one I know that you'll be interested in: Georgetown also had some plans that they wanted to see approved, and they've been approved.

So while we still need a plan to get out of the economic tough times we're in and we still need a plan that's going to bring our budget back to a balanced state by 2017-18, at the same time, people are also looking to how we're governing, what projects are moving forward and what sort of things we're prepared to do in order to make that economy move forward.

I think in the speech from the throne you'll see some things that we will do while we bring that economy back to a balanced state. For example, we're going to protect health care and education, and we prioritize them as the most important public services. Our way of doing that, of course, is the investments that I've outlined in the hospital projects around my own community. The new Oakville hospital, for example: I think final numbers that I'm seeing starting to come in now are somewhere around a \$2.5-billion total cost to build that hospital.

But when I look to other institutions in my own community, for example, in the post-secondary sector, you look at Sheridan College. They just opened a fantastic campus in Mississauga. I think that that's something Sheridan's been after for a long, long time. It's no wonder, when we look at how we rank in the rest of the world, when you look at participating in post-secondary education—and that's skills training, that's colleges, that's universities—you'll find that Ontario leads the OECD countries, which means that we get more young people into post-secondary education than anywhere else in our comparative group.

We're also proposing to make it easier for those families who earn under \$160,000 to allow their children to go on to school, to allow those students to attend school. We're proposing to implement as of January 1, I understand it, a 30% tuition fee grant, which means that tuition fees for the vast majority of students in the province of Ontario will drop by 30% and just make it that much easier for those people of medium and moderate means to attend university, college and skills training.

Simple things like transportation: We know that a modern economy can't operate without some of the things that typify a modern urban setting. One of the things we've been trying to do for a long, long time is improve public transit in the GTA. You will know, Speaker, and I think many other members from around the GTA will know that the GO train is really the backbone of transportation throughout the GTA. It gets people in from the communities that are in the 905 area and brings them into the 416 area, into the Bay Streets and the University Avenues, where they work and where a lot of the wealth for this province is generated. We're proposing in 2012 to move that GO train service to 30-minute service all day long. At rush hour, we're also proposing to move that to 15 minutes. So that's the sort of practical investment that people are hoping that we're going to make in the 905 area.

Interjection.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My colleague the member from Thunder Bay is telling me that that works very well in Thunder Bay because, of course, if you have more trains to run, you need to purchase more trains. If you need to purchase more trains, you've got to build more trains, and those trains will be built right here in Ontario and right here in the member's riding of Thunder Bay, which creates even more jobs.

Now, Time Magazine recently was bemoaning the lack of investment in young people in the United States, the lack of investment in public education in the United States, and was saying that one of the major reasons that that economy is having such a tough time turning around is that, along the way, states like California that used to lead the world in public education have gradually withdrawn from funding their children's education, their public education, in a proper way. We're not doing that here in the province of Ontario, and I don't think anybody would expect us to do that.

What I think you're seeing is a very competitive tax structure. You're seeing corporate and business taxes reduced to a point where I think they're competitive with other jurisdictions. When you take a look at the province of Ontario, depending on who you talk to, it either ranks first or second, the other major jurisdiction being the state of California, as being the best place to invest in all of North America if you're bringing in capital from offshore.

When I look at my own community, I see the value of partnering with the private sector. When I look at Ford of Canada and how they're prospering in my community of Oakville, I thank God that we invested in flex manufacturing in the Oakville plant, which allows them to be flexible, obviously, which allows them to run a number of models on the same line, and they can run the models that are selling, as opposed to the past when what they would have to do is retool the entire plant.

I look at Siemens, for example. Siemens has just announced in Oakville that they will be opening their new head office right on the QEW: 800 jobs right there.

So we can look to the economic aspect of things, to the wealth generators, and think that we're continuing to invest, the economy is continuing to grow. It's not growing as quickly as some would like it to, but let's look at some of the net job increases we've seen: 75,000 this year alone in Ontario. Last month, we saw a net increase of 30,000. Since 2003, net new jobs in the province of Ontario are up over 500,000. So we are making a lot of progress in ensuring that Ontarians who want to work have work in the province of Ontario. Is there more to do? Absolutely there is.

Now, a way of preparing people and I think one of the ways you attract investment is to ensure that you've got the most well-educated workforce, and we decided that we would be the first jurisdiction, that I'm aware of anyway, in North America that has decided that it's going to full-day JK and SK, which means that our four- and five-year-olds now are getting that sort of head start that's going to allow them to flourish even further in the public education system. And it will allow them to become even better citizens, I think, Speaker.

So I think you have to look at this as part of an overall plan, as a package that's going to continue to invest in the skills of our young people. It's going to continue to invest in those things that Ontarians hold precious: things like public education, things like public health care. At the same time, it's going to invest in the economy. It's going to partner with economic investors to ensure that we continue to see the sort of job creation we've seen in the province of Ontario. We'll not consider tax increases, we won't privatize public health care, and we'll not pursue any austerity measures that could be harmful to the economy.

I think, Speaker, on balance we've got a plan that is going to be a very positive plan. It's going to require some tough decisions, it's going to ask for us all to work together from all parties, but at the end of the day, I think that Ontarians should be proud of the approach that's

being taken in the speech from the throne, and I think we all need to bring our best to the table. Thank you, Speaker.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we move on, I want to recognize the presence in the chamber of a former member of the Legislature who served in the 35th provincial Parliament: Jim Wiseman. Welcome, Jim.

We now move to the member for Mississauga-Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak on the throne speech. I'm very impressed by the good comments that my colleague the member from Oakville has made.

I'm very excited about the program that our government has put forward to shape the future of our great province. This is the agenda on which we campaigned, and this is the agenda which Ontarians want us to implement. I believe that, once again, this government has outlined a prudent plan based on a balanced approach that will protect our important public services, such as our schools, our colleges, our universities and hospitals, and at the same time will eliminate the deficit that has been created by the unforeseen global economic circumstances.

Defending and implementing programs such as education, health and creating jobs is the cornerstone of our government's implementation strategy.

I would like to speak about education. We all know how important education is, and I'm a big fan of education. It may be full-day kindergarten, secondary, post-secondary, Ph.D., formal or informal; education is the very basis of our economic foundation, and it helps break the cycle of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to enroll full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds by 2014 across the province. This will benefit 250,000 children in our province. My riding has already seen the benefits from the first phase and the second phase that we have rolled out. This will enable our parents to save time and money, and our children will have a seamless day, and this will enable our children to reach their best potential.

This world is changing. We all know that 70% of future jobs will require post-secondary education. We are proposing to create 60,000 new spaces in addition to the 200,000 which we have already created, and we will reduce post-secondary tuition fees by 30%. This will enable the families to save \$730 if the student is in college and \$1,600 if he or she is in university.

Post-secondary education is very, very important, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I would have been able to achieve or do what I have done in my life without post-secondary education.

I would like to touch upon the medical school that has been opened in UTM in Mississauga. I was at the open house. It was a wonderful med school, and I was impressed by the lecture theatres. In their lecture theatres,

students in Mississauga can connect with their teachers and peers through video conferencing. I have not seen that kind of lecture theatre in my life; I have seen it for the first time and I'm very much impressed, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, on November 30, I was at the grand opening of Sheridan, which my colleague also spoke about. It's a state-of-the-art facility. I spoke about it earlier in my statement time. This is great news for Mississauga. This will not only benefit our youth, adults and seniors; it will also create jobs right in Mississauga.

Mr. Speaker, the next thing I would like to speak about is the HST. As we all know, for a long time and consistently, the HST was criticized by the opposition as some sort of evil tax. There can be nothing evil about modernizing our 50-year-old tax system. We have reformed our tax system, we have restructured our tax system, and we have brought our province of Ontario in line with 140 other countries around the globe.

I would like to speak about a foreign company which is an Italy-based company, Silfab Ontario. They opened their doors in my riding in the month of April because of the single sales tax and our Green Energy Act. They have already created 100 jobs, and their goal is to create 200 jobs. So this HST is attracting direct foreign investment, and this has made the province of Ontario second to California in attracting direct foreign investment. It has created over 60,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. According to Forbes magazine and the World Bank, our tax reforms are key factors that have grown our economy and added new jobs. Mr. Speaker, it has added new jobs.

Another program that I'm particularly excited about and would like to speak on today is the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. Ever since coming to this place, I have had countless meetings with seniors in my community office, at Queen's Park and on the campaign trail. One thing I have learned is that our seniors want to stay in their homes as long as possible. This bill, if passed, will enable our seniors to live in their homes with dignity and respect. At the same time, it will generate \$800 million in economic activity and will create more than 10,000 jobs across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand on our record and I'm proud to support the agenda of this throne speech. I urge all members of this House to support it as we move forward together in these uncertain economic times for the greater good of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for some questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to the member from Oakville, and I always call him "the member from where there's no more gas plant." Actually, he has some connections with the Premier; no question about that. I don't know just how to put that.

Member from Mississauga-Brampton South: I think that your remarks were important. You said that you support your leader's plan, as you should. You're on the plan. You have been there for the last four years; I believe it's your second term. I commend you.

But you know, you should really read this book by the auditor. Even the throne speech that you were talking

about started with the theme, a plan for jobs and the economy. But what did the auditor tell you yesterday? You're spending more, and people of Ontario are getting less. Even on legal aid, you're spending more than any other province per capita and serving fewer people.

1710

On energy: Energy has gone up 46%. Now it's going up 8% every year.

Mr. Speaker, in fairness, they either didn't read the throne speech or the auditor report, or they're only listening to Premier McGuinty or reading the notes that he gives them. It sounds to me like they're only reading the notes that they're supplied by the Liberal staffers.

But it's true: Ontario is in difficult times. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has put two very good suggestions on the table—he has put them on the floor—for job creation. One of them was a wage freeze, a public sector wage freeze. Premier McGuinty is going to be laying off 7% of the public sector just before Christmas. Our job is to keep everyone doing their job as much as possible. The other part of it is to make it affordable for families, especially at this time of year.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add some commentary to tonight's debate. I guess we're discussing, ultimately, what is the agenda of the provincial minority government. Highlighted in this book are some of the failures throughout the years and areas that this government will have to address at one time or another—hopefully sooner rather than later, because Ontarians are counting on them fixing some of the problems that the Auditor General has identified. But I'm wondering how on earth this government is going to afford to do many of them.

I focus specifically on one of the areas in infrastructure. We've got crumbling provincial bridges that really aren't being inspected at the rate that you would think we should be inspecting them. In fact, we don't have people to even do the inspections. So you'll have to hire people, you'll have to pay them, and then you'll have to fix the bridges so that we don't have more crumbling infrastructure.

Ultimately, I'm coming to the conclusion that you're not really mismanagers; you actually are effective, because your plan is working. You can see today in an article by Tavia Grant in the Globe and Mail, dated December 5, that the OECD indicates that the wage gap is the largest in this country that it has ever been. You're actually effectively implementing your plan because, again, the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and that wage gap continues to increase. What do you do to perpetuate the problem? Continue to roll back corporate tax cuts.

Well, we've laid out a proposal. We've laid out practical steps and tried to get you to understand that corporate tax reductions are not going to solve the problems that are identified in this book, and people are looking for those remedies today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to thank the members from Oakville and Mississauga–Brampton South for their very eloquent remarks on our throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there's no denying that we are in tough times, and every single one of us—all 107 of us here—has a choice. The choice is, do we take the easy route and make populist choices which are easy in the short term but are going to hurt the province in the long term, or do we do the right thing even though it might be tough? That's what this throne speech really is about: It's about doing the right thing to make sure that Ontario continues to be one of the best places in the world to live in, grow old in and raise our families in. That's what this throne speech is about.

When I was campaigning—and I don't know what your experience was—what I heard at the door, no matter where they came from, no matter what they looked like, everybody wanted three things: They wanted good jobs, they wanted good prospects for their kids, and they wanted safe, healthy communities. That's what the throne speech is really about. It is about delivering these three things, because this is what Ontarians expect of us, and they deserve nothing less.

So I really ask the support of every single person in this House for this, our agenda, because it's really not about our agenda; it's about the agenda of the people of Ontario. That's what they want: good jobs, good prospects for their children and safe communities. Thank you so much.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the address by the members from Oakville and Mississauga.

I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker: I take my hat off to the Liberals. They are amazing at getting their people to fall in line. Like lemmings going over the cliff, they give them the Kool-Aid and they drink it. But I'm going to tell you, Speaker: After seeing this auditor's report, they have had to strengthen that Kool-Aid something fierce because you've got to be almost ashamed to stand there as a Liberal today and defend that record when you see this.

This is disgusting to see this kind of report. And you know, Speaker, the government was aware of the findings of the auditor's report in June of this year. They knew about it. Did they tell the people, "All of the stuff we've been telling you about green energy is false"? Did they tell the people, "Did you know that the stuff we told you about your electricity bills going to go up 1%—we weren't telling the truth"? They never said that. Speaker, they should stand here and apologize today. This report is the most scathing indictment of a government I've seen in my time in this House. And do you know what they do? They laugh it off, because for Liberals, it's business as usual, while people struggle in the province of Ontario.

When you talk to families in the province of Ontario, when you talk to low-income seniors, what is hitting them the most? It's the cost-of-living increases that are driven entirely by government policy, whether it's the HST on essentials or the energy costs that have been driven up. They can say, "Don't trust the Tories." Fine and dandy; I can live with their words on that. But you know, they can't stand in this House and say, "Don't trust the auditor." If you can't trust the auditor, you can't trust anybody, and what he's saying is, they have been wrong, they misled the people in this province and they should be ashamed of themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary term.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now turn to one of the government members to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I thank the members from Mississauga–Brampton South, from Durham, from Essex, from Mississauga East–Cooksville and finally what we just heard from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I think that there's a pattern emerging in the House, Speaker. When I listen to some of the newer members, you get a refreshing attitude from all sides of the House, where people are bringing forward their best ideas. The member from Essex, for example, was questioning: Should we be investing more in our infrastructure spending? Should we be inspecting bridges more often? But I think the way that he framed it was in a positive way. He was asking a question: Should we do that? Are we capable of doing that? Would that be a good thing for the economy if we did that? And I think we are doing a fair amount of investment in infrastructure. I think it's about \$11 billion per year over the next three years. But the question that was raised by the member from Essex is a good question. It's a question that I think deserves an answer. I would hope, as we start to move through the proceedings in a minority government, that we'll start to get those sorts of questions and answers and that free form of exchange.

Some of the more experienced or the older members came out with the same old, same old. Whether anybody should be any more ashamed of what happened this morning—I'll leave that for the other members to form an opinion on that. Certainly, I don't think that it was a high point in the proceedings of this place; let me put it that way.

I think that what we're looking forward to here is a plan that is going to move us through very tough economic times, a plan that needs a serious approach, a plan that needs good ideas from all three parties, a plan that needs input from all three parties and good, constructive, positive input. Some, we'll agree with; some, we won't. I know that the Conservative Party, for example, would love to put a gas-fired power plant in Oakville. I suspect that that's not something that the people in Oakville would agree with. Certainly at election time they didn't agree with it.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the throne speech. I'd like to make reference to the fall economic statement—the so-called economic statement. It struck me as more of a political statement when I listened to it in here.

1720

Just to begin, Speaker: As we all know, Ontario has just re-elected a colossal deficit, debt and promise-breaking machine that will continue to run amok. “Amok” is an Indonesian word that has now been kind of incorporated into the English language.

From my perspective, the future does not bode well for employment, does not bode well for income and, by extension, for the funding of health and education. So what lies ahead will be very difficult under this government; obviously more borrowing, more spending. Very clearly, more borrowing and more spending is not the answer to a very big problem that we have in this province, which is too much borrowing and too much spending. It's passing strange that you would address that problem by more borrowing and more spending. However, this is the government we have at present.

There are some numbers, and we heard some numbers not that many days ago. Ontario's debt is now pegged at—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Another day older and deeper in debt, eh?

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's coming—something north of \$240 billion, and it does grow larger and will continue to grow larger with every fiscal shortfall, with every deficit. It took eight years—it'll be a little over eight years. This government will double Ontario's debt, and this is what we've been seeing day by day. It does remind me of that line in the song by Merle Travis, one of my first favourite songs, “Another day older and deeper in debt.”

Mr. John Yakabuski: “Sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt.”

Mr. Toby Barrett: There's an interjection for Hansard.

By the time this government meets their deficit elimination target, by the time they reach a balanced budget projected target—which they won't; they projected it well after the coming election—the provincial debt will be something on the order of \$300 billion.

Ontario's deficit: The budget deficit's climbed to \$16 billion. That's \$2 billion more than last year. It's \$1 billion more than the provincial Liberals admitted it would be on the eve of the election, and here's the kicker: Government spending continues to skyrocket.

While government revenue rose by \$1.5 billion over the past year, Mr. McGuinty found a way to outpace that rate by increasing spending by something in the order of \$3 billion. This province does not have a revenue problem; very clearly it has a spending problem, and to put it simply, with the revenue now the highest in the province's history, it's clearly the wasteful spending, the reckless spending that has put Ontario out on a limb. Every year for the past eight years, Mr. McGuinty has jacked up spending by 7%. No wonder we are witnessing

this explosion of government debt. Again, we've just had a recent bill to promise more spending for those who could find \$10,000 to upgrade their home.

Amazingly, Speaker, while the fall economic statement outlined the impact of overzealous spending, the McGuinty throne speech promises more of the same. Again, no evidence; not a single new measure to control the spending. Two weeks of legislative debate now under our belt, and we see a continued failure to even talk about the debt crisis, let alone the job crisis that sees Ontario losing something like 100 jobs each and every hour.

Those of us in opposition continue to propose solutions to help boost private sector job creation. Very recently, in supporting an NDP private member's bill to remove the unaffordable HST from rising home heating bills, as opposition we amended the throne speech as follows: “This House asks that the government create a legislated mandatory wage freeze to control the cost and size of government and reform apprenticeship ratios to create 200,000 jobs.”

Mr. McGuinty introduced a voluntary wage freeze some years ago, Speaker, as you recall. It failed. It didn't work. It failed everyone except perhaps government union bosses, the ones who helped Mr. McGuinty get re-elected. Therefore, a mandatory, legislated public sector wage freeze is required to find the savings, rather than other measures like cutting services. I mean, that would be an option that this government would be forced into. A wage freeze could come in at \$2 billion, over the next two years, in savings.

As well, amending the journeyman-to-apprenticeship ratio to one-to-one, as I mentioned, would create something in the order of 200,000 new skilled jobs for primarily young people coming into the trades. I do wish to quote Tim Hudak: “We will bring a laser-like focus to standing up for private sector job creation....”

So, we're two weeks into a new political landscape, Speaker. The direction of the McGuinty minority looks a lot like the very same binge-spending, debt-doubling path of the old McGuinty majority. Both government and people in Ontario are taking on ever-higher debt. Looking for answers on the economic and job fronts that—to date, two weeks in, I see no evidence of any thought of delivery.

We have a number of new and returning MPPs here. We've been greeted with this throne speech and the attendant economic statement, and anyone here looking for any fiscal restraint, I'm afraid, to date has been disappointed. My concern: The McGuinty government's wildly out-of-control spending, spending that single-handedly doubled Ontario's debt, is showing no evidence at all of stopping.

So, now that the election has reached its finish line, it's vital that we don't lose all those ideas that so many of us here picked up at the doors, in restaurants, at all-candidates' debates and in coffee shops. Many of these issues fortunately were addressed by the Auditor General's report, and many of these issues, as we have recently found out, were known by this government even before the election.

But I'm concerned that minority leadership—or lack thereof, really—may mean continued government inability to understand these issues and to meet the needs of these issues, particularly in ridings like mine, a rural small-town riding in southern Ontario. We know that minority governments have weaknesses: Instability is one, Speaker—inefficiency. I know there is talk of co-operating, and after several months on the campaign trail, it is incumbent on all of us to kind of roll up our sleeves and deal with some of these issues, the issues that certainly were raised in my riding.

We've got some big problems looming, as I mentioned: spending and borrowing; deficits and debt; jobs; lack of jobs; the economy; and the concern that without additional tax revenue coming in, even though this province hasn't done badly on the revenue side, we have to pay for health and education. That takes up something like 70% of the budget.

Repeatedly in my riding we heard concerns, and not only the issues I've raised so far, but concerns as far as—well, at the door it was all about paying the bills, particularly paying the hydro bills, and paying taxes. Lack of jobs: That has consistently been a chronic issue down in my riding, Speaker. Industrial wind turbines: again, a riding that stretches across the north shore of Lake Erie. And, of course, the land dispute: Douglas Creek Estates and the adjacent smoke shacks outside of Caledonia. More recently, as things changed internationally, there were concerns about the deficit and concerns about Ontario's debt.

I attended something like 12 all-candidates' meetings. Some of them were formal all-candidates' nights, and it comes up at these meetings. The times have not been kind to people in my area. I don't know how people get by on their income. I know all of us would have met people at the door on a very low income—people who are working, and people who literally have been kicked in the teeth over the past several years, without any help—in a sense, with obstruction—from this now re-elected present government.

1730

Despite the frustration I predict of this minority government—we have seen what happened in Ottawa; I think there was something like three minority governments—I certainly look forward to working with my caucus colleagues. I see some good ideas, some good work, from the NDP next door. It's incumbent on all of us to advocate for the priorities of the people we represent. We are elected representatives. Very simply, our job is to represent those who elected us—priorities that include our commitments, the PC commitments, to make life less expensive, to make life less intrusive and more reflective of Ontario's values. Much of that lies—this is what we can fight for up here—in the principles of less spending and less borrowing.

We're in the midst of watching, locally, 400 jobs leave our Nanticoke coal plant. Nanticoke, up until recently, was the largest coal-generated electricity generating station in North America. It's being shut down—our hope is

natural gas. It's passing strange, in a way: We see the shutdown of coal-generated electricity, and at the same time, in the south end of my riding, we're witnessing the advent, the arrival, of something like 200 industrial wind turbines—too many for a small, relatively populated rural area. Building on our past calls for a wind moratorium, I look forward to continuing to work on a series of initiatives aimed at, at minimum, slowing the progress of McGuinty's unaffordable, unreliable green endeavours. I will say that people in the south end of my riding, those along Lake Erie, are desperate to stop this onslaught of too many wind turbines.

We must also address the uncontrolled, unsustainable rise in electricity prices. Again, over eight years, rates have increased 84%. That's a 150% increase for those people with smart meters. Again, this has to be a top priority for everybody up here at Queen's Park.

We have just received the Auditor General's report. It provides some insight not only on the shameful, wasteful spending, the growing debt numbers, the poor planning, the complete lack of oversight over program spending, the lack of oversight over these necessary programs within the Ministry of Community and Social Services, for example, my critic responsibility. Again, wasted tax dollars do very little to deal with growing deficits.

Here's what the auditor had to say with respect to the Green Energy and Green Economy Act: It "authorized the government to fast-track the development of wind and solar ... projects without many of the usual planning, regulatory, and oversight processes." Another quote: "While this helped these projects get off the ground quickly, their high cost will add significantly to rate-payers' electricity bills in the future." This is what we were telling people at the door; this is what the Liberal Party, the Liberal candidates, knew during the election.

Some 50,000 jobs; we heard so much of this being talked about. Again, Auditor General McCarter: "A majority of the jobs will be temporary. The 50,000-job projection included new jobs but not those jobs that would be lost as a result of promoting renewable energy." Further, he went on to say, "The cost for green energy jobs is very expensive. It's between \$100,000 to \$300,000 per job."

The Samsung deal: This predominates in my riding. I've met with Samsung a number of times. Mr. McCarter indicated that paying the South Korean consortium \$110 million over 20 years was done with "no formal economic analysis ... to determine whether the deal was prudent."

He goes on to say, "Neither the OEB"—the Ontario Energy Board—nor the Ontario Power Authority "was consulted about the agreement."

Speaker, it is my responsibility, and this has been going on for five and a half years now, to continue to bring attention to a series of issues surrounding native land disputes that have suffocated our area over the past five years. I'm afraid it just continues to get worse. It was only Saturday that we had eight people arrested. Some people thought, "Well, this is a good idea; people have

occupied Caledonia for five and a half years.” On the weekend, eight people were arrested. It turns out, the people that were arrested were not those who were occupying the subdivision; they were people from town. They were walking down a Haldimand county road—Surrey Street, I think is the name—in the subdivision; non-native residents. They were the ones that were arrested.

It is incumbent on all of us to take seriously the principle of concentrating on the need to enforce one law for all. Crack down on illegal smoke shops. Crack down on illegal tobacco. Again, in Caledonia, adjacent to Douglas Creek Estates, this illegal activity occurs on Ontario government land. It occurs on MTO, Ministry of Transportation, property. I can think of two smoke shacks there at Caledonia. There’s a smoke shack on the Hydro One property underneath the gigantic hydro towers. They’re brand new towers—well, they’re five and half years old. To this day, they have yet to have wires strung on these new towers coming out of Niagara because you did not see Hydro One workers on these towers, Speaker; it’s Mohawk warriors, and you’d see the Mohawk warrior flag in the past flying on these towers.

Risk management is something that we all fought for in the PC caucus. Farmers fought for risk management, something I have long championed. I have probably been involved in more tractor rallies than anybody in this House on that and other issues. Reluctantly, this government finally extended the RMP for crash crops. But the new programs have to be fully implemented, the new programs for cattle, hogs, sheep, veal. And we must bring in, essentially reinvent, SDRM, the self-directed risk management program, that is so important for horticulture.

We have 500,000 regulations in the province of Ontario, as you would know, Speaker—bureaucratic regulations, rules, paperwork, forms that kill small business, forms that force farmers and small business men to literally realize it’s not fun anymore and just give up.

I know my time is running out. If I can go back to eight years ago, I recall chatting with a gentleman in what was known as Alice’s Restaurant, just north of Scotland, Ontario. His luxury every afternoon was to order a tea and a butter tart for something like \$2; sometimes he would spend up to \$4. At that time, he was under threat of a sales tax. Many petitions killed that deal. Then right afterwards, this government brought in the largest income tax increase in the history of Ontario, followed by the largest sales tax increase in the history of Ontario.

If I can predict the future, this government will be bringing in more taxes, regardless of what they’re going to tell us.

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

1740

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s a pleasure to be able to rise in this House and follow the comments of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and the discussion on the throne

speech. On one hand, we have the throne speech, which was the plan by the government, and on the other hand we have the Auditor General’s report, which doesn’t show such a rosy picture of the government.

The only mention of northern Ontario in the throne speech was the Ring of Fire. In the Auditor General’s report, there was a fairly long mention about how there was no real management of how our forests are being regenerated. Now, the regeneration of our forests is something we look for in the future, like the government is looking for in the future, and I hope it’s not an example of how they plan to manage our natural resources like the Ring of Fire. One thing that hasn’t been mentioned to this point, to the best of my knowledge, is that with the Green Energy Act, a decision was made to sacrifice manufacturing and sacrifice further processing of minerals in this province, because it has made our energy costs much too high. And on the same thing, with the Ring of Fire, is this government planning to sacrifice the processing jobs to defend the exorbitant prices that are caused not just by green energy, but basically by energy policy? We’ve already sacrificed much of our forestry production because of exorbitant prices for electricity. One of the big questions that arises in my riding in northern Ontario from the throne speech is, “Are we or are we not going to sacrifice the processing of the Ring of Fire in Ontario?” Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I’d like to comment on the presentation made by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. He likes to blame the government for all the problems that are here in Ontario, but let me say that the throne speech and the economic statement are action statements. They’re reasonable action statements at a time when we’re facing some very challenging and difficult times with the global economy, and I think we need to move forward in a very fiscally responsible manner.

We always hear from the other side that we need to tighten our belts and not waste money, not spend money, try to balance the budget, and yet they want to put forward the removal of the HST from home hydro, which is actually going to cost \$350 million, and I don’t know where we’re going to get that money.

But with reference to the HST, it’s only going to benefit a few, because in the north and in my area, we have a lot of people that heat with firewood. They’re not going to benefit from this. We have a lot of people that heat with pellet stoves. They’re not going to benefit from this as well. This Liberal government puts in policies that are fair for everyone right across the province.

Let me talk about the new initiative to expand the eastern Ontario development fund, including the south-west economic development fund. I encourage both sides of the House to support this, 107 members, because in my own riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, in my hometown, Alexandria Moulding was about to move three years ago, and it’s because of this fund that they remained in Alexandria and we saved 400 jobs right in a community that could not afford it.

So this government is about creating jobs. I encourage all members opposite to vote for the throne speech. Let's work together. Let's move forward. In life, nothing is perfect.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be recognized and join in the debate and to respond to my colleague the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

I have to say that I didn't know Toby Barrett before I was elected as an MPP in 2010, but he's a cool guy, Speaker, and I really enjoyed listening to his speech, because having spent some time talking to the member, he is so close to his constituents. He is one of the very, very few politicians that remain committed to monthly door-knocking. Not just during the election, but every single, solitary month, he goes out and canvasses his constituents. So when he speaks, like he did this afternoon, so eloquently, he speaks knowing that his constituents are always coming first. I appreciate his comments, the fact that we are not just discussing the throne speech, but the fact that we're talking about the amendment, because you really have to put some bold ideas forward, Speaker, when you're having a discussion about the throne speech. I'm so glad that the member brought forward the ideas that we in the Ontario PC caucus have placed on the table: the issue of a mandatory public sector wage freeze, which I think we need to have more discussion about—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Makes perfect sense.

Mr. Steve Clark: —because it does; it makes perfect sense. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk talked about the \$2 billion that it would save.

In addition, he talked about a job creation opportunity that we on this side of the House feel very strongly about, and that is renewing and getting rid of that antiquated apprenticeship ratio. If we were to give it a name, it's That '70s Show, because we're back in the 1970s when it comes to that apprenticeship ratio.

I think we can provide some real change for private sector job creation if you'd listen to these amendments, and I'm sure in my heart that we'll generate that discussion here in the Legislative Assembly, Speaker.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple minutes to comment on the speech by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. He spent a fair bit of time talking about the economy, and I suppose that's understandable.

But I'm always pleased to have the opportunity to remind people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and, in fact, right across the province of Ontario, what occurred from 1995 to 2003. It's always very interesting to listen to the Conservatives when they talk about the economy, the people who like to pretend they protect your pocketbook—responsible for the biggest tax shift in the history of the province of Ontario, that downloading exercise, that little shift that took all the provincial

responsibilities from the provincial government, downloaded on to people's residential property tax base.

Now, people will know that as a government, we on this side, the Liberals, have been uploading those costs back off of the residential property tax base for several years now. That will be fully phased in, I think, within the next two to three years. That is going to save people in the province of Ontario, every one of those residential taxpayers, a whole lot of money—the biggest tax shift ever.

As well, I always have fun reminding my constituents in Thunder Bay–Atikokan about the sale of Highway 407. I don't know if they did an economic impact study on that one before they sold a publicly funded highway to a private sector company, but that, I'm told, was valued at about \$12 billion—

Interjection: Sold it for three.

Mr. Bill Mauro: —and I'm told they sold it for about \$3 billion. Now, I don't know if they did an impact study on that one or not.

Speaker, when they were in government, the Canadian dollar was about 65 cents, the price of a barrel of oil was about 40 bucks, the American economy was red hot, and our export-driven economy had a great market over there with the value of the Canadian dollar. Still, under those circumstances, they left us with a hidden \$5.5-billion deficit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I appreciate the feedback. This will help get us through to 6 o'clock. Some very important issues have been raised. I appreciate the comments from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Primary industry: I was raised to believe that the wealth of the province of Ontario came from primary industry, from mining, from forestry, from agriculture—

Mr. Paul Miller: Steel.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —steel, of course, as the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek indicates, petroleum refining, generation of electricity. That's what built the province of Ontario, and it's so important that we continue to recognize this. I appreciate those comments.

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, if I quote you, you indicate we should move forward in a fiscally responsible manner. I agree. Let's listen to economists. Let's talk to some economists. There may be good ideas from Don Drummond. He's addressed the finance committee several times over. We shall see. We'll get an opportunity very soon to judge on that.

1750

Member from Leeds–Grenville: Where do our ideas come from? Where should our ideas come from? They should come from door-knocking, physically door-knocking, whether it's in the winter or in the summer, and it doesn't matter if it's election time, because I find there's really no time during elections to door-knock. I do my door-knocking the rest of the time.

We all have to remember: Regardless of party, we're elected representatives. That means we're here to repre-

sent the people that elect us. I look at my job in a very, very simple way. That's where the ideas come from.

Of course ideas, good ideas, come from economists and professionals and consultants, but we can go a long way by just listening to the people that we represent.

I'm out of time.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: On a point of order: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if this is a point of order, but I'd like to introduce my daughter, Taylor, Marilyn, Karen and my husband, Tim.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for that point of welcome.

Pursuant to standing order 42(a), there has been 12 hours of debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am therefore required to put the question.

On November 23, 2011, Mr. Coteau moved, seconded by Ms. Sandals, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

On November 23, 2011, Mr. Hudak moved that the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

"However, this House asks that the government create a legislated mandatory wage freeze to control the cost and size of government and reform apprenticeship ratios to create 200,000 jobs in the province of Ontario."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of Mr. Hudak's amendment to the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the amendment will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be deferred until Wednesday, December 7, 2011.

Interjections: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): So ordered.
Vote deferred.

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 5, 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on second reading of Bill 2? I look to the opposition first.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to the bill on the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I'd like to make a comment: At the last debate that was going on, the member from Trinity-Spadina was noting about the "progressive" being back in the Progressive Conservative. The "progressive" has always been in Progressive Conservative. We are a strong party. But I would like to note that during the election campaign I did note the NDP signs had that stripe of blue on them, so you guys are coming in the right direction.

I'd like to reiterate my comments from the other day on the government claiming that this bill will help 1.8 million people. But I'm not so sure, and the number is much, much smaller.

Not everyone at the age of 65 needs to renovate their house. In fact, we live a better life in Canada nowadays. We are healthier and are living longer. I've heard many times that 60 is the new 40. So, there's no way that you can plan for your needs at 65, what you're going to need in 15 to 20 years. Therefore, the number, 1.8 million, is actually a lot larger than what this bill is going to attract.

I, myself, work in the health care sector. The majority of seniors who need to renovate their houses are usually in their late 70s and 80s. Again, it's not that large a number compared to what the government is touting this tax credit is going to benefit.

On top of it, you're asking seniors to pay \$10,000 for a \$1,500 tax credit—spending money to save their money—but seniors still have to pay \$8,500. I would tend to say that if seniors had that amount of money, they would spend it on renovations regardless of the tax credit. Considering that the median wage for seniors is only \$25,000, they would have to put up almost half of their yearly income to pay for those renovations.

When I was going door to door during the campaign and talking to people of all ages—seniors, families, youth, farmers, businesses—all of them said, "Give us some tax relief." They loved the idea of removing the HST off heating and hydro.

Now, the bill from the NDP is speaking only to heating, but that's a start. We can move to it, I hope, and get the HST off hydro, too.

People from all over my riding, from London, Lambeth, Rodney, West Lorne, Dutton, Fingal, Shedden, Aylmer, Port Burwell, Dorchester and Thorndale, all said they need some tax relief, and this bill does not deliver the tax relief that they want.

What is this bill going to cost? There are no definite amounts. I have heard that it will cost about \$60 million by the end of March, but the total cost is unknown. We cannot continue to have these programs from the

government where costs are not known. Look at what is going on in this world. Look at Greece; look at Europe. The warning signals are there, and this is where our province is headed. We need to start spending wisely. Why not have a program that provides benefit to all seniors, as well as families?

My riding has one of the highest unemployment rates in the province. We are approaching 10%. Families are hurting, and this bill does not answer their needs. Reducing the amount of taxes they pay on their escalating heating bills will give them some relief as they look for new work. Winter is just starting and their severances are ending. One has to wonder how they're going survive to pay their bills throughout this winter.

Another point: While there are some seniors who need to renovate their house, there are also a number of residents of this province who are not seniors who still need to renovate their house due to disabilities. I heard quite a bit during this campaign that parents with children with disabilities need help. Removing the HST from home heating will help those people. It does not solve their problems of having renovations, but at least it gives them some amount of money that they could put towards renovating their houses on their own, using the money they saved to spend.

This bill does nothing to address that whole segment of society. Again, this bill is picking such a small, minute quantity of people. Why not look at giving tax relief—

Mr. John Yakabuski: A lot of relief for everyone.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: —for everyone. Thank you.

Another point that came up during this campaign—and again, if we could remove the HST from hydro. Seniors who are on oxygen have to run this machine 24 hours a day, and with this new time-of-use billing, they cannot shut off their oxygen during the day when the

prices are the highest. I imagine there won't be any tax credit for that group of individuals. Why not work to get the HST off their bills to undo this hardship? Those seniors who are having trouble paying their bills because their medical devices are running during the day: Do you think they have the money at home to pay for these renovations to renovate their houses? I think not.

Again, you look at what the bill pays for: grab bars, bed rails, lever handles, handheld showers—those are not going to cost \$10,000. They are pretty minute costs, so what is the real benefit that people are going to put in? Usually you can renovate a bathroom for people who are minorly disabled, who have a bad hip or a bad knee and are waiting to get into surgery, with a grab bar. Put it on the wall of the shower. What is that, \$35? Installation, \$50? So what's 15% of that—\$10? I mean, really, you'd have to do major renovations to benefit from this.

What they do need is services to stay in their house. It's one thing to renovate—it's like building a hospital but not providing money to keep the doctors, the nurses and the staff working. It could be an empty building.

You could renovate someone's house, put in a new ramp or such, but really—am I done?

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Oh, sorry, wind it up? Yes.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have 15 seconds. Well, I thank you for—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I regret to interrupt, but it is 6 of the clock, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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

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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
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Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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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
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