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of Ontario

First Session, 40th Parliament

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 22 February 2012

Mercredi 22 février 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 22 February 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 22 février 2012

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, 2012**

**LOI DE 2012 VISANT
À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS
ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS**

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 21, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, 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): The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm very happy to make a contribution to this debate on Bill 11. And there's so much to say, it's hard to know where to begin.

Just to explain briefly what the bill does, the bill provides the government with the legal framework to continue the eastern Ontario development fund and create a new southwestern Ontario development fund to promote economic development in southwestern Ontario.

I want to say from the outset that we will be supporting the bill, obviously, but we have a series of criticisms that we think the Liberals need to look at and/or correct, and I will speak to those four points in a little while. But I want to say, overall, that I have some concerns about where the government is going, where it went for a long time along with my Conservative brothers, who are committed to market fundamentalisms, and indicate some of the problems connected to that.

Mr. John O'Toole: Fundamentalisms?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was friendly, I think. I think some of you guys agree with that. If you disagree, please let me know.

I want to indicate that both Conservatives and Liberals have made gross errors when it comes to giving away billions and billions of dollars to corporations without

any obligations on those corporations. I consider that to be an egregious mistake.

Toby Sanger, an economist, said that we have given away—not we; you Tories and you Liberals—\$20 billion in corporate giveaways from 1999 to the present. That's a whole lot of money. I can't even count those zeros, but the fundamentalists can count those zeros. Twenty billion dollars just given away. And the idea of giving away taxpayers' money, citizens' money, is that those dollars would create jobs. Why else would Tories and Liberals give our money away? And the evidence is not there to show that jobs have been created. Now, if you listen to Tories, they'll keep saying, "We need to cut further." God bless them. And Liberals, unfortunately, have been following the same footsteps.

There was a time when I had a friend in this Legislature, who was a Liberal, who used to agree with me. If I may speak or quote from my former friend:

"What the Conservatives are asking us to do is to cut corporate income taxes—those are taxes on profitable corporations—by \$2.3 billion.... That definitely means"—and he's very affirmative; he says, "That definitely means closing hospitals, firing nurses, cutting education."

Mr. John O'Toole: That's Bob Rae you're talking about.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It could have been.

"It means driving up tuition fees. It means cutting the Ministry of the Environment and the like"—meaning there is more—"and it means running a deficit."

Can anybody figure that name out? Can any Liberal indicate who that might have been?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Bob Rae.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Bob Rae—it's another past.

M^{me} France Gélinas: D.M. are the initials?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry?

M^{me} France Gélinas: D.M. are the initials?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was the Premier.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just going through your list of former friends. I haven't got there yet.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have so many former friends.

That was Dalton McGuinty, and it wasn't long ago. How quickly can a Premier change his mind on something where he was very definitive, where he said, "That definitely means closing hospitals, firing nurses, cutting education. It means driving up tuition fees. It means cutting the Ministry of the Environment" and so on? How could the Premier have changed his mind so radically, so revolutionary—not even evolutionary, but so revolutionary—in a short period of time? Who changed his mind?

Who did he speak to that he could have been so definite about what he said and that within a space of a couple of years, lo and behold, he was cutting corporate taxes?

I don't get it. I don't understand those things, because it seemed to me that he was lucid at the time, that he had the capacity to understand, and that the little grey cells at the time were working. Within a couple of years, the grey cells simply disappear. I don't get that, and I'm worried about him, you see? I worry about him.

But I worry more about the little guys out there who are affected by his policies. It's the little guys I'm worried about, those who earn \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000. Those are the people I worry about, because as we enrich the very wealthy, we, by the very connection, make a whole lot of people poor outside in society.

Just to tell you, in the last couple of years, the Ontario government says that corporate income taxes will hand \$535 million to banks and \$135 million to insurance companies, because they need our money. You understand banks are in trouble, still. Even though we've been through this recession, the banks quite proudly say, "We've been spared because of our management practices, unlike America, Europe and so many other countries." Our Canadian banks still need a break because they're doing badly. God bless. I'd like to be a bank and make a couple of bucks the way they are.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: Bank of Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Rosie bank. That's on top of the \$520 million provided to banks through the elimination of the capital tax—God bless—another gift. We just give it away to those who have, because the capital tax—those poor people who own so much capital, so much money; we need to cut the capital tax because they deserve it, they work so hard. We don't work hard. Regular folks don't work hard. Bankers, they work hard. Yes, sirree, and we've got to cut their capital tax and we've got to cut their corporate taxes because they work hard. Even though they manage the economy well, we've got to give them some more so they can pay their workers so little.

When my daughter started working at a bank when she was 26 or 27 and she was making—I think she started out at 26,000 bucks as a bank teller. I said, "Steph, what are you doing working in a bank? Why would you, with a four-year degree, work in a bank making 26,000 bucks?" These are the wealthiest—

Ms. Cindy Forster: They're still paying 12 bucks an hour.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And they still pay—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Twelve bucks, tellers, it starts at the bank.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Twelve bucks?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Twelve bucks.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: When you add it up—

Mr. Jeff Leal: How is she doing now?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She's doing much better. She left the bank.

But these are rich, rich corporations, rich financial institutions that have a whole lot of money that they take from us. They pay their workers so badly and then we give them a tax cut and the Tories and Liberals say, "Oh, that creates jobs." Oh yeah? How many more jobs have we seen? And, by the way, have the salaries of the workers gone up? I don't think so.

Just to cite some statistics about who is doing well and who isn't: If the money did not go to create jobs, where did it go?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Could I remind the members when they enter the chamber that they should acknowledge the Chair? Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Where did the money go?

There you go, Minister; you just have to acknowledge the Chair.

Where did the money go if it didn't create more jobs, if salary increases didn't happen? There's an attachment here that I want to refer the members to, Mr. Chair—Mr. President.

Profits have increased significantly. CEOs have been awarded significant compensation increases. Dividends for shareholders have been boosted. But the hiring spree that Tories—God bless you—and Liberals—God bless you too—have been promising has not been coming. But, lo and behold, look at the enriched.

Scotia Bank: quarterly profit of \$1.2 billion. There was an increase of 19%; CEO pay, \$10.6 million. That was an increase of 10%.

Royal Bank: \$1.8 billion in profit, an increase of 23%; CEO pay, \$11 million. God bless; I'd like to have those—\$11 million, think about that.

We are in a good dollar, I have to admit, but not a lot on the menu.

TD Bank: quarterly profit of \$1.5 billion, up 19%; CEO pay—John, member from Durham—\$11.3 million, up 8%.

Ms. Cindy Forster: What bank was paying \$11 million?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: TD Bank.

Bank of Montreal: \$776 million, up 18%; CEO pay, \$9.5 million, up 28%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Hey, Rosie, they're hiring at the bank. You should put your name in.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah. They tend to like Tories better, it seems, and a lot of the good Liberals.

Ms. Cindy Forster: But they want to do public sector wage freezes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah, we'll get to that part perhaps.

Sun Life Financial: \$508-million profit, up 72%. These are the people who are doing badly these days. They need to jack up the rates because they're doing so badly. Profits are up \$508 million; profits, 72% up. The CEO pay is not available, meaning it's probably really high. We just haven't been able to get access to it; God bless. Manulife, same thing; Great West Life, same

idea—\$580 million, up 20%; the CEO pay is not available.

As you can see, they have done well. The old Premier Dalton McGuinty that I remember understood that giving away billions of dollars to corporations, to financial institutions, was just not going to work. That was the old Premier I used to like; the new one, I don't know. My impression is that from time to time a whole lot of Liberals think the same way, but you just have to zip it up, because otherwise you would be criticized tremendously—not by the Premier, but by the chief of staff, who wields so much power; and criticized by the banks, of course, the new friends of Dalton McGuinty, the Premier.

So the money doesn't go in creating jobs; the money does not go in increasing salaries; the money goes to increase the profits of the corporation, and it goes to increase the dividends to those who have money in the institution. But it doesn't go where it should, including productivity.

One of the arguments the fundamentalists make, along with the Liberals, is that if you invest in the corporations by reducing their corporate tax rates, they will invest in productivity. The evidence from Toby Sanger and so many other economists is that that has not happened. It hasn't happened. Much of their money is on hold. We are talking, by the statistics provided by Stats Canada—if I can just get a hold of them. Stats Canada says they have half a trillion dollars in savings because of a variety of issues: profits mostly, but also the \$20 billion that we have contributed provincially, by these two governments. So half a trillion, and in the last couple of years another \$86 billion has been added to those savings.

We are awash with money. Corporations and financial institutions have billions of dollars stashed away, saved, in cash holdings that could be invested in productivity, and they are not doing it. They're not creating the jobs. Yet the strategy of the federal Tories and the provincial governments, Tories and Liberals, is to give more of our money away. It's fundamentally idiotic, and they still are doing it.

To cite another study, by Bill Currie and Elliot Morris—Bill Currie is vice-chairman of Deloitte Canada and Deloitte's American managing director; Elliot Morris is a senior consultant at Deloitte. They say, "Surprisingly," we are not investing in productivity. "In the survey, Canadian executives indicated that they are not planning to invest in the types of activities required to improve productivity. When we look at the actual decisions Canadian business leaders make about activities that bolster productivity, such as investing in R&D"—research and development—"and commercializing innovation, Americans are 13% more tolerant of risk than Canadians, according to the Deloitte executive risk behaviour index.

"Canadian business leaders' aversion to risk is especially important because it underlies other critical contributors to our growing productivity gap, including a lack of risk capital for start-ups, chronic underinvestment in machinery and equipment, insufficient levels of pri-

vate sector R&D, and an unwillingness to engage international markets," they say.

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"We need business leaders to be more willing to undertake intelligent risk by making investments in R&D, launching innovative products, developing improved production techniques, implementing international best practices, integrating state-of-the-art machinery, and expanding into new markets. Combined, these activities would contribute significantly to Canada's productivity and international competitiveness."

Now, Mr. Drummond understands this. He argues we should not invest, as a government, in job creation. He has given up on manufacturing, unlike Germans, who have an incredible commitment to manufacturing because it creates jobs—and good-paying jobs. He's saying we should give up on trying to shore up our manufacturing base, give up on job creation, and help corporations to increase their productivity.

Good Lord, we've been doing that for 15 to 20 years. Both Liberals, from Chrétien to Mr. Harper to former provincial Conservatives—God bless you again—to the current Liberals: All we've been doing—all you have been doing—is giving taxpayers' money away for the last 15 years, and still the result is the same. They take taxpayers' money and store it away for a rainy day, for a good day, when they can use those profits to buy up corporations that are crumbling, that are in debt, use our money to buy up whatever is available after the European crisis is over, or while it is still in a crisis, or while the Americans are still with their \$2-trillion or \$3-trillion deficit. That's what they use our money for.

We have been giving billions away in order to help the corporations and financial institutions create jobs, but they are not doing that. We're giving the money away as a way of making sure productivity increases, as a way of maintaining good jobs, possibly increasing them, and they're not doing it.

And Mr. Drummond is saying we should focus on productivity. There are other ways of doing it—not job creation, but other ways of helping the corporations and financial institutions to help with productivity levels that are so incredibly low. It's the job of governments to say to the corporations and to the financial institutions, "You have a responsibility on your own to make sure we maintain manufacturing jobs, create manufacturing jobs and good-paying jobs; make a commitment to job security."

That's what the Germans do. That is why they're so good at it. They have a commitment of job security and a commitment to work: manufacturing jobs that keep people employed. And it keeps people employed even in recessionary periods. They don't fire their workers; they maintain their workers. Germans understand the value of maintaining good and strong workers in the workplace. Not only are they working and buying and earning an income; it keeps the economy going. They are not laid off. German governments make up the difference between the days they lose with a differential in pay so that they remain employed in recessionary periods.

What the fundamentalists do, what the Tories and Liberals are doing, is fire them. What the Liberals are prepared to do, contrary to what McGuinty said a couple of years back, is that they are prepared to make severe cuts, cuts that will compound our debt levels and will make our economic situation worse. Even the IMF understands—the International Monetary Fund; this is one conservative organization run by the fundamentalists in America. Even they understand that we create a spiral when you make, as governments, such strong cuts that lay off workers. We make them unemployed. We make them collect welfare, meaning it costs more to governments. They are not purchasing, because they have less purchasing power, and what we are doing is creating an economy that is worse than where we find it.

I am a bit worried about where the Liberals might be going, although they're quite hush about what they're going to do. Monsieur McGuinty is waiting to see what the public has to say. He's taking a little bit of cover. He's waiting for a little bit, until the finance minister brings forth his budget. He said to his caucus, "Boys, don't say very much"—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Boys?

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—"and girls. Don't say very much. Let's put this out. Drummond has done his report. Let Mr. Drummond speak. The other four people who were part of the commission: Let them just be there; don't let them speak—just Drummond, which he has done. Then let this report go out and speak for itself. Then make sure that, through our Liberal contacts in whatever newspapers we control"—or not control, really—"where we have friends, there are strong articles by Liberal friends and other Conservative friends to say that what Drummond has produced is the best thing, the most miraculous report, that has ever been produced," as a way of saying, eventually, through Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, that we've got to make these cuts. "These experts are saying we've got to make these cuts, and the public is saying, 'Oh, man, if we don't do this, we're the way of Greeks. We can't let that happen; no.'"

I remember so well when we were in power in 1990 and we had a deficit. We used to have Tories and Liberals scream. I remember Chris Stockwell saying, "We don't have a revenue problem; we have a spending problem." I hear the Tories say the same thing today, and I hear some Liberals saying that today.

I remember Bob Rae, the then-leader of the NDP, so influenced by the corporate sector, by the financial institutions. They were saying at the time—they even showed us a clip from New Zealand saying, "We have hit the debt wall. Lordy, Lordy, Lordy, we have hit the debt wall, and if we don't make cuts now, today, we are in serious financial trouble." And lo and behold, it didn't take much to start talking about cuts that we had to make. Boy, was he influenced by the same people who are trying to influence the Liberals in this scenario.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Where was your voice in all this?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh yes, John, because I see you have a lot of clout with the Premier. I can see that, Minister Gerretsen. I can see that he's probably having a lot of coffees with the Premier on a daily basis, a cappuccino on College, talking about what he shouldn't do. That's how much influence he has—with all due respect, of course.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I told you to be quiet about that, Rosie. You promised.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's the Premier and the chief of staff who have the power; you know that, and all the Liberal backbenchers know it. That's why they're grumpy. And even ministers are grumpy, because they know where the power lies. So where are you, Mr. Gerretsen, Minister, in this whole thing? I understand—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will take his seat for a minute. I'll remind the member not to use names. It's ridings. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're so right, Speaker. I was talking about the Attorney General. You're so right.

It's just that I don't think you guys have much power to influence those things. My point is, Bob Rae then was influenced tremendously, as you are being influenced right now, as you are creating, through Mr. Drummond, the scenario of a potential \$30-billion deficit.

You've got to do that, I understand that, in order to be able to say eventually to the public, "These are the cuts we have got to make. Otherwise, if we don't do that, we are heading the way of Greece." You've heard that argument. I know that some of you wouldn't say that, because so many of you are so smart. You wouldn't say that, but you allow others to be the foil for the things that you will do eventually.

We haven't done so well in this regard. We have not tied corporate tax cuts to job creation. That's what New Democrats said during this election. We are supportive of giving support to corporations that create jobs, that give us job guarantees. If you create jobs over the long term, you have support. We think this is a correct policy. China has been doing it for quite some time. Contrary to the Washington fundamentalists who say that should not be the case, the Chinese have been investing in areas where they believe jobs will be created, and they control that.

Mr. Grant Crack: A dollar an hour?

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: They control that. They control the investments.

Some Liberals look quizzically at the statement. They—we Canadians—are so lucky that China is doing so well that they should want our resources, at whatever price, it seems, to the corporations who love to send our jobs away to them at a dollar an hour.

What we need is a commitment in this country to keep jobs here. What we need are corporations who have an obligation to Canada and to Ontario to keep the manufacturing jobs here and not send them away for a profit—for their profits, for their shareholders' profits—that gives very little to the little person who's worried about making ends meet, to the little person who's struggling to

pay the mortgages on housing prices that have gone through the roof.

Debt levels for individuals have increased in proportion to their wages. They have gone to levels that we never dreamed of. The debt levels of homeowners have skyrocketed, yet shareholders' profits have skyrocketed too, it seems. The profits of the CEOs, the financial institutions—they are doing well, and that money is not trickling down; it never does.

That's why we can't give our money away willy-nilly. That's why we say that if you're going to give money, tie it to jobs. Those are important incentives that we can give. Those are governmental regulations and governmental strengths that we have that will maintain jobs in this province. I'm all for that.

So this little measure, Bill 11, is a good little measure. We are talking \$20 million a year. It's not a bad thing; it's a good thing. We're not talking about huge amounts of money, but it's still a very useful thing to do as a way of helping different regions of Ontario.

Here are some of the concerns that I have with respect to the bill. The job guarantees are a real concern. The past Liberal job creation programs have been weak in this regard, and until we see the actual language used in the contracts, we don't know if the promised job guarantees are strong enough. This is one of the first arguments we make.

The civil servants who talked to us about this particular bill said, "We will create job guarantees." I take them at their word, and I will take that to mean the Liberal government is committed to making sure that there are job guarantees. Thus far, I have not seen anything that you Liberals have done to have worked.

Is this commitment toward job guarantees, as we release this \$20 million a year—given the take-up, if there is a take-up. Will the government put in this commitment that there will be job guarantees? I am not sure.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is why, Attorney General, I said that thus far, you have all failed so miserably as it relates to so many parts of Ontario where we have seen these failures. The Attorney General says, "No, absolutely," and that's what I would expect you to say.

We had a commitment from the civil servants, when we met with them about three and a half months ago, that they would send us the language. Thus far, we have not received it, as you might imagine and as you probably would expect. That is the history. What they tell you in a little gathering, however nice they are, when they go back to the political leaders saying, "They requested this; we said we would or we could, as civil servants"—once you've done that, the politicians are going to tell you, "No, you can't. You won't do that. No, you can't do that." And, as would be the case, we haven't yet seen any language. Will we ever see it? I don't know. But that is one of the concerns that we have raised with staff and that we raise here in this Legislature today.

So the first concern was, \$20 million is not a pile of money, but better than nothing; the second was job guar-

antees. The third is that the southwestern fund is being financed by reallocations from other programs within the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation.

That's a problem for me. What it means is that we take money from an existing fund and put it in another fund and we make it appear that it's a new fund, that this is a new program. It's not the case. These are offsets. I love these words, because they mean absolutely nothing to people until they understand it. "Offsets" means that you take from one pot, put it in another pot, you call it new, and lo and behold, to the public we say, "New money for western Ontario." It's not new money: We simply rob different pockets of funding from different areas, and in particular this one is the strategic jobs and investment fund. There are probably two or three other funds that they steal money from, but this is the biggie. And I believe the strategic jobs and investment fund is a good one; I really do.

So we could have continued to fund some development in Ontario through that fund, but what we do is create a western Ontario development fund and we call it new, because it helps. It helps the politics of it; it helps the government in power. It makes it appear like they're going to be leveraging huge amounts of money—which they do, by the way. Some study has indicated that when you created this in eastern Ontario, this \$20 million a year generates \$487 million in leveraging dollars, which is a good thing. You put some money up front, it leverages dollars from other areas and it creates jobs. It's a good thing. My point is, if you already have that money working in some other program, just taking it and moving it somewhere else—I don't know, right?

Mr. Grant Crack: The program doesn't work now.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, no, no; it does. It does, member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell—a big riding. That's where you may have been wrong—if I heard you correctly, because my hearing gets complicated as I get older. By the way, you are continuing with the eastern Ontario development fund; that continues.

Mr. Grant Crack: Because it works.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ah. No, but we didn't oppose it. Are you following my arguments? We didn't oppose it, right? Okay. So we're now doing the same in another part of the province, at the other extreme. All I'm saying is, you're taking money from an existing pot.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: It makes sense.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It makes sense; right. It makes sense; okay. So that's the third concern that I raised.

The other one is that we argue that both of these funds, both the eastern and western funds, should have independent boards. Member from Glengarry, what do you think? It seems like you're going to be speaking for the two minutes—because I see him taking notes. You're taking notes. I can tell when somebody is about to do a two-minuter.

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We argue they should have independent boards. Implicitly and explicitly, I would think that you would

agree. The whole idea of having independent boards is so that they are responsible and would be responsible for approving funded projects. This is how it's done in northern Ontario heritage. You know that, right? Yes. And you probably agree with that, right?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I wasn't listening to everything you said. My ears perked up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. You have an independent board that manages the northern Ontario heritage fund; right. There's a logic to it. The idea is that they decide where the funds go, on the basis of some objectivity. We can never eliminate objectivity altogether, because the people you appoint could be either Tories or Liberals and very few could probably be New Democrats, but the objectivity will never been terminated. But on the other hand, an independent board is less likely to be influenced by government—not entirely, but less likely.

We have a precedent. So if the northern Ontario heritage fund has an independent board, we are urging you, good Liberals—some—to establish the same kind of criteria. It would look good on you. Because if you don't do that, what you are saying is that these funds are subject to politics. They are subject to leanings, propensities, proclivities by those in power. At the moment, it just so happens that it's you, but if it were the Tories, they would do the same. So we're saying that, to eliminate political influence by the Premier or the minister or the local members, it would be preferable to have an independent board.

These are the four areas that we believe would improve the bill. My suspicion is, you're not going to do any one of those things. I have an inkling. I could be wrong. Sometimes my sense is that you might take one or two of the suggestions as a way of saying, "You see? We listened." The jobs guarantee promise: You might do that, but I await the result of that, but I don't know whether it will happen.

So, this bill: not so bad. There are some problems. It could be improved, but the arguments I make are very valid, and I would hope that some Liberals would listen to the arguments that I put forth.

I remind the government that what New Democrats have promised in this election is that we should stop the corporate tax giveaways. It's a big gravy train, as I hope I indicated in my arguments earlier, but we would stop that gravy train. Rob Ford understands gravy trains. Hopefully, Liberals understand that this is one of the biggest gravy trains that we have ever established, that we have given so much more than Liberals could ever dream of, because I know that half of you are divided on this. The other half, the Conservatives over there, think it's a good idea, but the other half believes that where you have gone and where you're heading is wrong.

Many Liberals, I know, understand that Ontario, compared to American jurisdictions, stands at a much, much lower rate of corporate taxes, and I think that's something that you need to listen to and that I think some of you understand. When you look at the chart of the com-

bined corporate tax rates for selected US states and Ontario, Michigan, with a combined tax rate, is at 38.2%. New York is at a combined rate of 36.1%. Ontario is at 28.5%. Pennsylvania is at 37.8%. The Great Lakes weighted average is 36.6%.

The point of these numbers is that it shows that our tax rates are very low. They're incredibly competitive. They should not go any lower. You Liberals and we, the public, need those billions of dollars that you have given away, that you plan to give away. We need them to deal with the deficit that the recession has left us and that many of you have left us because of your policies. You need to stop that, and I'm hoping you're having those discussions.

I have a strong inkling, once again, that the Premier is likely to freeze those corporate giveaways. He has hinted at it a couple of times. The finance minister has hinted that this New Democratic idea—he wants to make it clear it's a New Democratic idea—about freezing corporate taxes is something that they're looking at. My sense is that you are looking at that. It will bring in savings. It will bring us money that we desperately need.

And then you're going to make some incredibly strong cuts to please the Tories, because you need to do that, and the fiscal conservatives in the Liberal caucus are happy to do that. Half of you are with that caucus over there, the Tory one, the Conservative one, and the other half struggles to say, "Man, I'd love to be a New Democrat when we're dealing with these problems." And I've got to tell you, if half of you thought that New Democrats could win elections, you'd come here in a hurry. I believe that very strongly.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, no.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do.

And so I argue with you, plead with you, literally: Don't keep giving money away. We need it. It will help our economy. It will help with jobs. It will help to ease the pain that so many are suffering in Ontario. Remember that wages have pretty well flatlined since 1990. We are talking 20 years. When you take inflation into account, wages have flatlined. Our workers are not doing very well. If workers are not earning a good wage, they will not spend. If they do not spend, our economy crawls. It doesn't move. It doesn't grow. Prosperity is gone.

So I appeal to the 50% of the Liberals who might have this kind of conscience to consider the troubles our workers are facing, men and women who are struggling to make ends meet, as there is a strong appeal from the fundamentalists to get rid of middle-class jobs, unionized jobs, the very things that maintained our middle class. As they appeal to erode and get rid of that class by eliminating the manufacturing, unionized jobs, I say to half of you Liberals: Don't let them do it. Don't let the Premier do that. We need to maintain those jobs. We need to make sure they have well-paying jobs as a way of making sure they have the spending power to keep our economy growing, to keep it prosperous.

I wanted to refer to the stat that I couldn't find, but I know that my mind was very correct in that. But I wanted

to say to people, “According to Stats Canada, corporate holdings of cash and similar assets reached nearly half a trillion dollars by the third quarter of 2010.” I was right on that. “Since the beginning of the recession, businesses added \$83 billion to cash holdings. No-strings-attached corporate tax cuts will only boost already astronomical cash holdings levels.” This is Toby Sanger, an economist, who said that. There are a lot of economists who are very worried about where we are headed, and I think we need to listen to them. We have to worry about the direction we are going in, and the direction that Premier McGuinty is headed in is the wrong one.

It is my hope that there will not be cuts that will throw people out of work. You have already begun that process. You have quietly fired thousands of civil servants. I hope that doesn't continue, because it's not good for working men and women. I hope that the program cuts you have in mind will not lay off or fire people, because that will hurt our economy even more. I'm hoping that the kinds of things that you will consider in that Drummond report will make our economy and our government function more efficiently without the loss of jobs. And where you do that as a government, you will have my support. If we make governments more efficient while we keep our employees where they are, that's a good thing. But if you're firing people, laying off people, that, in my view, is a huge problem, and it would be an idiotic mistake for this government to make.

0950

So, Speaker, I want to wind up. I think I've covered most of the thoughts or most of the issues that I wanted to raise. I've raised my concerns about Bill 11. Some of it, I think, the Liberals might want to take into consideration, which I hope they do. Most of them I think will be rejected, but we made, I think, a good attempt at raising some of the problems that this bill has brought forward. Merci beaucoup.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no; questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? You're at your seat now?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I am.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Wait a minute, here. We seem to have a—are we ready now? Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pleasure to respond to the address from the member for Trinity–Spadina this morning.

He talked a lot about friendships, and so many times he's given me that sign that we are inextricably linked here, but there are times that we seem to be on opposite sides of the scale. But in this one, we do agree that we're both going to vote against this bill because of the myriad problems and ineffective inefficiencies.

Interjection: That's not what he said.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yak, you weren't listening. He said he's supporting it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, is he going to—are you supporting it? Yesterday, you guys were against it. Yesterday, the NDP were speaking against the bill when they were doing their questions and comments, so we're not really sure what they're doing.

But I'll tell you one thing: Every time I see this government bring in a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, it clearly follows one mantra: What are the political considerations and what is best in furthering the goals of the McGuinty government in being re-elected and systematically picking off stakeholders here and stakeholders there?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Could I please ask the members to show some respect and have a little order? I can't even hear the speaker who's talking. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could hardly hear myself.

It fits into their mantra of continuously doing things for political reasons. And you know what? Ontario is in a different world today. You've got to stop acting on that basis. You've got to actually stand up over there, take the bull by the horns and do the things that are right for this province and its people. The political games should be over; you've got to stop playing them over there. This problem is far too big for you to keep behaving like that in that fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from—oh, the minister. Sorry.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much—and the member from London West. I want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for his comments.

The approach here is pretty simple, isn't it? The bill really represents an opportunity for the people of southwestern Ontario to get some assistance to partner with each other, with a little bit of financial assistance, to create jobs and economic growth. It is an area that has been hit by the world economic recession and the downturn in the auto industry. We need some assistance down there.

I've been to a couple of the consultation meetings, and we've had people from a lot of ridings held by members on the opposite side of the House, in the opposition, turn up at those meetings and say, “We'd appreciate some financial assistance from this fund. We've got some good ideas to create jobs.” Our communities, like Strathroy, like Wallaceburg, like the Haldimand area, like St. Thomas, like Chatham, they're all down there saying, “We see a real opportunity here.”

The real question for the people on the opposite side of the House, the opposition, is: Are they prepared to support jobs in those communities, like Strathroy, Wallaceburg, Sarnia and Chatham?

I'm really looking forward to working with the members from the NDP on how to make sure that this is as strong as possible, make sure that this bill is as good as possible, make sure that this bill is as good as possible, make sure that we can deliver jobs and economic oppor-

tunity and optimism for the people in a region that has been hard hit and is looking for a little bit more assistance.

I don't think it's going to wash if the members of the opposition say no to southwestern Ontario. I don't think it's going to wash in Strathroy or Wallaceburg or Clinton or Sarnia or Chatham. I don't think they're going to be able to say they're doing nothing for jobs in that area—and get off their high horse and start supporting jobs in the southwestern Ontario region.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina and the minister. Quite frankly, however, we have to point out that this is divisive policy by the government across the way. It's pitching one region of Ontario against another, and it's not fair. It's not fair to the voters in southwestern Ontario, western Ontario, eastern Ontario or northern Ontario. This is one province. This kind of politics needs to stop.

We understand that businesses are the backbone of the economy here in Ontario. We support small businesses, business growth, business development, not just in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario, northern Ontario, but Ontario as a whole, collectively. If this province needs to get its strong footing back, put ourselves back in the place where we should be, as the economic engine of Confederation in the great nation of Canada, we need to start looking at this as a whole, not region against region. The time for politics is over. We need to move forward. We need to move past this. We need to be progressive.

We are supportive of businesses, business initiatives, helping businesses with tax cuts that are going to create and retain jobs here in Ontario—not just southern Ontario, western Ontario, northern Ontario, eastern Ontario, but Ontario as a whole, collectively. It's important. The divisive politics—this is enough. It's over. The government needs to realize—we need to work together as opposition, as well as our NDP members—that we need to work collaboratively to ensure that businesses stay here, that we don't have another Caterpillar on our hands.

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

M. Taras Natyshak: Monsieur le Président, merci, finalement. Et merci à mon collègue, le député de Trinity–Spadina, pour ses commentaires courageux, vraiment—courageous in that he's not bound by the constraints of the big banks, as he mentioned, of the insurance companies, who seem to be dictating policy that comes from the other side. What he proposes, I think, is the Ontario tragedy in reference to what's happening in Greece—the road that we are going down, the road paved by successive Liberal and Conservative regimes, and a cautionary tale to not go down that road.

There are models that have bucked the trend. I would point to Iceland, who did not buckle under the pressure of the IMF, who did not slash and burn their social programming, who actually said, “No, we're going to do it differently. We're going to maintain those fundamental

pillars of our society.” Lo and behold, they've come out of the recession, come out of the crisis, with a 7% unemployment rate, an economy that's bolstered by social programming and a decent quality of life.

This program in the bill, I think, references—and here we are in 2012, and we are finding out that the government wants to pay attention to southwestern Ontario, finally. Why not 20 years ago when the effects of the free trade agreement, NAFTA, and deregulation were playing their role in the erosion of manufacturing jobs? So let's ensure that Chatham, yes, requires support, but that we don't have another Navistar on our hands, where a company leaves town with money in hand, laughing all the way to the bank.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Oh, sorry—two-minute response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is there another turn?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Two-minute response.

1000

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I listened—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry, there's a problem here. Mr. Marchese is supposed to respond. We've had our four rotations. Mr. Marchese, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Very helpful there, Attorney General.

Speaker, I don't agree with my Conservative friends: the member from Renfrew–Nipissing or the member from Northumberland–Quinte. I understand what they are saying, but Ontario is a big province. It is not easy to administer politics from one central area, which is usually Toronto, and I'm not knocking Toronto, because I'm from here and I love Toronto. But it's hard to run everything from Toronto. Ontario is three times bigger than Italy. Italy has 56 million; we have 13-plus. It's a big territory.

All I argued—and you will know that there was already a fund in eastern Ontario, and it continues. They haven't taken that away, just in their defence, and now they are creating a western, and we have a northern Ontario fund. So most of the regions are being taken care of in a local way. All I have raised in terms of all the arguments I made—and some of them were longer, and I don't have time—is to say, look, there are a couple of things you've got to do. We need job guarantees, so we need to look at the language to make sure you've got that, because we haven't seen good results coming out of some of your policies so far in this regard.

The other one is that we need independent boards. If you have an independent board, it deals with what the Tories and New Democrats are saying, and that is that there should be no political favouritism by the minister or anybody else. I don't see why you can't create independent boards. The program is a good idea, but if you have an independent board, you then take away the opposition from the opposition parties, because once you've done that, then you deal with many of the problems that we

have raised. If you can do that, we think you will have improved Bill 11.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to speak about this bill because I've lived with the eastern Ontario development fund in eastern Ontario for the last seven or eight years that it's been operating, and it is a great program. Let's take all the politics out of this and let's just see how all of this started. Let's just see how all of this started.

There used to be an eastern Ontario development fund to help rural eastern Ontario, because all of the development was taking place in the GTA, and that program was cancelled during the Mike Harris years, in the late 1990s.

Okay. So what happens next? I'll tell you what happened next. The eastern Ontario wardens, who are the leaders of all of the various municipalities in eastern Ontario, got together and basically said, "How do we get economic development going with some government support in eastern Ontario?" It was their idea. It was the eastern Ontario wardens—all of you have been at their various meetings—that actually came up with this idea back in 2003-04.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to get in his seat if he wants to make comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: They had this great idea of this fund. We adopted it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister, I'm still standing. Thank you.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The government adopted this as a program back in about 2003-04, and basically the way it's set up is this way: It's an \$80-million program. Now, the Tories will say we didn't spend the entire \$80 million, and that may be true. I believe we spent about \$55 million of it during a four-year period of time, but it's better than nothing that would have been spent during your period of time.

There have been about 60 different loans made across eastern Ontario, and it's all been administered by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. There is a woman in the Kingston area, Rita Byvelds, who is the administrator of the program and who has done an excellent job. And who does she work with? Well, she works with the individual smaller companies that are looking for some sort of a loan idea in order to expand and create jobs. This is all about creating jobs. Rather than taking this political attitude of, "We're against it," etc., I've been to some of your ridings and made those announcements. And who was there? Your own members were there. Steve Clark was there in Brockville when I made an announcement.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister, when I stand up, you're supposed to stop talking.

Secondly, I'll ask you again: Use ridings, not names.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Leeds–Grenville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you very much.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Okay, the member from Leeds–Grenville was there and he thought it was a great idea that this cable company in Brockville got some support.

How does the program work? Let's talk about how the program works. The program basically gives about a 10% top-up to the investment that is going to be made by a local company to expand. What does the company have to do for that 10% top-up? They have to create a minimum of 10 additional jobs, and that is what has been happening.

Who are the main proponents of this? The economic development officers in each and every one of your communities; they are the people who are driving the process. They work with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and they approve the applications. I can tell you there has been very little, if any, political involvement in actually approving the applications. I know that for an absolute fact.

In my own community of Kingston, there have been some excellent small companies, high-tech companies, that have benefited from this program and that have created the new jobs. Let me just mention a few of them.

MetalCraft is a company that makes emergency boats—fire boats and rescue boats etc.—that are literally being sold all over the world. About 10 or 15 years ago, they were a company of about five or 10 people; right now they employ something like 150 people in high-tech jobs. They wanted to expand a number of years ago, but they needed a little bit of government help to actually make that expansion go, and we basically said, as a government, here is—I can't remember the exact amount, but it seems to me it was about \$500,000 or \$600,000. They created the additional jobs and as a result of that, that company has grown, and it's providing tremendous employment for people in my community and in the adjacent communities. Sometimes it goes to a particular riding, but it doesn't really go to the riding. The people that work there come from all over the place.

Let me mention a number of other companies in the few minutes that I've got left. Bombardier; yes, Bombardier got a loan to basically come up with the new high-tech vehicle that's needed for the future. They created a minimum of 20 to 30 jobs with the amount of money that they got a while ago.

George A. Wright and Son—what does George A. Wright and Son do? They're a company in Kingston that's been around for about 100 years that make tool and die operations. They are expanding that particular business. They are creating new jobs.

We have Eikon. Eikon is a tattoo manufacturing organization. They don't actually do tattoos but they basically make the machinery that is necessary to create tattoos, which they now supply all over the world. Now, you may or may not like tattoos but, I'll tell you, it's an expanding business. They went from an operation of about two or three people that worked out of the back of

their garage into an operation that now employs, in making this tattoo machinery, about 50 or 60 people. That's all good economic development.

There's GS Solutions. I mentioned Centennial Global Technology; they manufacture solar panels. Small, little companies started in a small, little location, at one time hired about 20 or 30 people; right now close to 100 people work there. How did they get that way? In part because of the economic opportunities that were provided to them under the eastern Ontario economic development fund.

These are just some examples. I think there have been about 60 loans in eastern Ontario. There have been well over 2,000 to 3,000 jobs created as a result of that. They are good programs.

So what are we doing with this good program? We're basically saying, "Okay, southwestern Ontario, you've got your own issues, issues that are separate from the kind of economic issues that we have in the GTA. We are going to give some help to the companies that want to expand there."

This isn't a corporate giveaway. Companies have to show that they've actually hired additional people as a result of this loan. The money isn't just being given away to them.

All I would suggest to the people on the other side—and I know it may be a little bit difficult, particularly for the Conservative members from eastern Ontario, many of whose ridings have companies in them that are high-tech companies that have benefited. Because of the politics involved, you may not want to approve this. You may just want to absent yourself from the House that day, because I can tell you, when you go back and talk to eastern Ontario wardens—and I know many of you, particularly those of you of a municipal background, have got a close connection with these people—they may not like the position that you're taking if you vote against a continuation of this program.

We insisted—the members from eastern Ontario—that this program has been so successful over the last four years that we want it to continue. That's why this is sort of a double-jointed bill; on the one hand, we want to set up the southwestern Ontario economic development fund, but we want the eastern Ontario development fund to continue.

Now, I've heard the member opposite talk about setting up a separate board and a this and a that, and who would appoint the people to these boards. That is not where the decisions are made. The decisions are made by the economic development officers, working in conjunction with the economic development ministry folks, to determine what are the good applications that will actually lead to job creation opportunities as a result of these grants being handed out to these corporations.

I can tell you without any doubt at all that this has been a great program for eastern Ontario. Many communities have benefited from it. They're all about only one thing, and that is creating more jobs. I can tell you from a practical experience, it's happened in my com-

munity and it's happened in every other community in eastern Ontario, because these loans have not just been handed out in Liberal ridings; there are just as many in so-called Conservative ridings, or whatever. They are all determined by the strength of the application that the individual company puts forward and by the amount of money that they themselves are willing to put into it—because for the capital investment to take place, the companies themselves have to come up with 85% to 90% of the money.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So what's the problem with an independent board? I don't get it.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, you don't need an independent board. You're just making it more—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So make me happy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask that the members go through this party and not talk directly to each other. They're veterans; they should know better. Thank you.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I just simply want to—I know I get a little bit excited about this particular program, because it has worked so well. It has worked extremely well. It has worked well in Brockville; it's worked well in Northumberland; it's worked well in Prince Edward—Hastings, in the Belleville area; it's worked well in the Pembroke area; it's worked well all over eastern Ontario. We've got a map to show you where all of the various grants have been made to these companies.

These are all small companies that want to expand, but they want a little bit of help. What they have to put up is a guarantee of X number of jobs—10 jobs or more—for every application. It's a great program and anybody that would vote against this program, particularly if you're from eastern Ontario or from southwestern Ontario, you are not doing your communities any good by doing so. I would strongly suggest to the Conservative members that they really rethink this.

This idea came from the eastern Ontario wardens; many of your buddies are there. Many of your communities have benefited from them. Please do not vote against your communities' best interests. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Due to the fact that we're close to 10:15, this House stands adjourned until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In the west members' gallery today, I'd like to introduce Jenn Hartman and her husband, David Smith. Jenn is the co-chair of the Campaign for Pediatric Ophthalmology at McMaster Children's Hospital. They're trying to create the province's largest centre of excellence for specialized pediatric eye care. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce His Excellency Ali Riza Guney, consul general of the Turkish Republic, at the Speaker's gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guest.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome, in the members' gallery, from the Ontario Harness Horse Association, Jim Whelan, the director, along with Brian Tropea, Kathryn Tropea and Jojo Chintoh.

Speaker, also with us today is Jody Jamieson. He's a horse owner and driver. Jody is a two-time and reigning world driving champion of this current year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to welcome to the assembly today, sitting in the members' east gallery, an old friend of mine from Thunder Bay, Peter Buchan. Peter is here today to watch his son, David Buchan. David is, I think, the page captain today. I don't see David here right now, but I know he's here, and I'd like to welcome them both to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, I'd like to introduce Joanne Haley and her sister Heather Stang. They're here to see Joanne's son Ryan, who is a page here today.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce Heide Hochgeschurz, who is the grandmother of page Katelyn Hochgeschurz. She is in the public gallery.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Marilyn Heinz from Burlington to the Legislature today. Welcome, Marilyn.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a great honour for me to introduce Mr. Zhengfei Chen, father of Judy Zhengfei, from Toronto Centre, who is one of our pages. They're in the gallery behind me—her parents. I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Rashad Vahed, in the members' gallery. He is the father of page Mariam Vahed and a very good and old friend of the member for Ottawa Centre. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's my pleasure to introduce, in the members' west gallery, the former member from Brant in the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, Phil Gillies. Welcome, Phil.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Never mind.

I have two introductions to do, so I'll start with this one. In the press gallery today, we have visiting journalism students from Sheridan College. I, like you, will remind them not to listen to everything that they're told by the people up there. Anyway, they are here at Queen's Park today to be shadowing and learning from the Queen's Park reporters.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today we have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hence my preamble.

Today we have Katie Breen, Brent Brown, Benjamin Carter, Melissa Dapaah, Mackenzie Fowler, Amanda Galbraith, James Garcia, Justin Grant, Emily Johnson, Matthew Koehl, Michael McBride, Brian Oliver, Michael Owusu, Natalie Rutherford, Danny Schertzer, Ashley Stennett, Colin Van Ooyen, Stefano Vito and Riley Welch. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And now if I could have our pages assemble for introduction. This, by the way, is what I consider to be a very good tradition that we started with the previous Speaker, and deserving.

I would ask the members to join me in welcoming this group of pages serving in the first session of our 40th Parliament:

David Buchan from Thunder Bay–Atikokan; Judy Chen from Toronto Centre; William Cooper from St. Catharines; Michael Davidson from Ottawa Centre; Shirley Fan from Markham–Unionville; Grace Glennie from Whitby–Oshawa; Ryan Haley from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; Katelyn Hochgeschurz from Carleton–Mississippi Mills; Jason Huang from Willowdale; Adrian Hucal from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek; Mackenzie Hulme from Algoma–Manitoulin; William Hume from Ajax–Pickering; Samantha Mariano from Vaughan; James Newman from Scarborough–Guildwood; Kriti Ravindran from Richmond Hill; Ryan Ripsman from Thornhill; Rachel Rynard from Simcoe North; Sophia Sengfah from Bramalea–Gore–Malton; Mariam Vahed from Mississauga–Streetsville; Patrick Williams from Dufferin–Caledon; Darren Yanni from Sault Ste. Marie; Ruby Yee from Barrie; and, for the sake of Phil Gillies, Grace Zhou from Brant. Welcome. Reassemble.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier: Yesterday, you weighed in on the Toronto transit issue, saying that the time for talk is coming to an end. The vote, I remind you, on Toronto transit was two weeks ago. However, we have now been 20 weeks since a provincial election campaign. You've had the Drummond report for some six weeks. I'm worried that you're setting a bit of a double standard here.

So, Premier, by your own standards, if two weeks takes too much time for debate, I'll ask you, why aren't you bringing forward your plan to finally reduce the size and cost of government? Will you table it today?

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I welcome the question—and the enthusiasm from my colleague in the Ottawa area.

We've made it clear that we will be providing our answer to Drummond through our budget, to be delivered in this Legislature at the usual time. What we're doing with this valuable period, of course, is listening to Ontarians. We're very hopeful that shortly we will strike a legislative committee that will take responsibility for giving full consideration to the Drummond report.

1040

I'm also very open to advice being offered by my colleagues in the opposition parties. I think we have a shared responsibility to be fair and thorough and, I would argue, exhaustive in terms of addressing the significant challenge before all of us. We need to tackle that deficit. We need to strengthen health care and education, and we need to do it all at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier describes this process as "exhaustive." Frankly, Premier, it's exhausting to see you now delay for a year. It was a year ago that you appointed Mr. Drummond. You said, "We won't make any tough decisions on reining in the size and cost of government for a year." It has been 20 weeks since the election campaign. You've had the Drummond report for six weeks. It's almost like you walked into your office after Drummond said, "My goodness, who spent all this money?"

Premier, let's be serious. You've been sitting on this issue for a long period of time. The time for dithering and delay is well past us. I ask you, will you act today before we get into a deeper hole? Put your plan on the table to get our books back in balance in the province of Ontario. The time for action is now.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate my colleague's impatience, but I think responsibility, or a responsible approach to dealing with the challenge before us, demands that we take the necessary time to get a response both from the opposition parties and the public in general on the Drummond report, and a bit of consistency would be helpful in that regard.

My honourable colleague began in his initial response to the Drummond report by saying that it's important not to cherry-pick. It needs to be adopted in whole, holus-bolus. But now we hear that they stand against the recommendations connected to LHINs. They stand against the recommendations connected to horse racing. They stand against the recommendations connected to the approach we need to bring to doctors' compensation, and they stand against a competitive process for school busing in rural Ontario. Those were all specific recommendations in there. First he says, "Buy the whole thing." Now he's saying he has got some reservations. A bit of consistency would be helpful.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Speaker, back to the Premier: The problem is, the Premier stands in one place only, and that's paralyzed. You described this report as a "road map," but you've taken us nowhere. For a year now,

you've dug a deeper and deeper hole and not put your plan on the table.

So, with all due respect, what you describe as our "impatience for action" I simply say is prudence, and that prudence is shared by the Dominion Bond Rating Service, which, the day after Drummond, said this: "[L]ack of resolve and" drastic "efforts to significantly curb spending growth in the next budget could be a cause for increased concerns for DBRS." A lowering of our status is going to imply more interest payments on debt and challenge further our ability to provide front-line programs.

So, Premier, I'll ask again: It has been a year now. You've had the Drummond report for six weeks. Will you table your actual plan today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, a couple of points in response to that. First of all, as Mr. Drummond and his team made abundantly clear—and I can refer my honourable colleague to the specific pages in due course. But I can tell him now that in relation to GDP, as a matter of total government spending, we're the third-lowest in Canada. In terms of our tax burden, we're the second-lowest in Canada. In terms of per capita spending, we're the lowest in Canada.

Now my colleague opposite says that we should move immediately and table our specific plan. I would argue that he needs a bit more time to develop some consistency with respect to his approach. Either we adopt it in whole or he puts forward a series of objections to specific recommendations. We await the outcome of that internal debate.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, Speaker: It is, I will add, disturbing that the Premier continues to pat himself on the back for fiscal responsibility when he seems to be the only person, including Mr. Drummond and Mr. Jack Mintz—your adviser on some economic issues, who says that you have spent far too much money too quickly, and you seem to have no plan to get it back in balance.

The Premier has actually responded to one recommendation in the Drummond report. He said he will not follow Mr. Drummond's recommendation on full-day kindergarten. The implication to the fiscal plan is \$1.5 billion. So, Premier, I think you have a responsibility then; if you've taken that off the table, is your \$1.5 billion going to be in increased taxes or in spending reductions? You owe it to us to tell us. If that \$1.5 billion is off the table, what is your plan to replace it with something of equal value?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we've made it perfectly clear, when it comes to full-day kindergarten, we are absolutely committed to that, come heck or high water. We think it's very important in terms of the basis for a strong economy that is built on the skills and education of our people. That's our strength. It's not oil; it's not gas; it's not the forestry; it's not the fisheries. It's

the people of Ontario. I think that's very important for us to understand together, and I'm going to invite my friend to share that.

I say to my friend, of course we will have to find alternate sources of savings, since we intend to adopt that. We've been very clear.

What I'm not sure about is where the opposition stands with respect to the Drummond report in its entirety. He says that we cannot cherry-pick, but now he says that he's against the horse-racing recommendations. He's against the recommendation in regard to doctors. He's against a number of other recommendations. So we'll give them the time in order for them to get their act together.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder again: Inside voices, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, with all due respect, this is the only plan you've put on the table. If you don't like your own plan, then put forward your plan. That's what I'm asking about each and every day in question period.

Mr. Drummond did say in his report, on page 9, "Message from the Chair," that "we expect that many of our recommendations will be rejected. We accept that, but each rejected recommendation must be replaced not by a vacuum, but by a better idea—one that delivers a similar fiscal benefit." I agree with Mr. Drummond. I assume the Premier does as well.

Premier, you've backed away from \$1.5 billion in savings on full-day kindergarten, and now your education minister is backing away from eliminating the hard cap on class sizes and eliminating a number of education bureaucrats.

So, Premier, is this a new policy development, and if you are taking these recommendations off the table, where will you find the additional savings?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Speaker, I think what my honourable colleague is saying is that he'd like us to present the budget here today. We don't intend to do that.

What we would like to receive is some consistency in terms of the representations being made by the opposition. The leader of the official opposition says that you can't cherry-pick from this document; you have to adopt it in its entirety. Yet, at the same time, we're hearing that they're not in favour of the LHIN recommendations. They're not in favour of those recommendations relating to horse racing in Ontario. They're not in favour of the recommendations with respect to firm but fair bargaining with Ontario doctors and the way that they receive their compensation. They're not in favour of moving towards a competitive process for busing in rural Ontario.

Again, as we work together to develop the content of our budget, it would be most helpful if we were to receive some consistency in terms of the position being adopted by the official opposition.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, sadly, Speaker, in spite of the fact that I'm asking very serious and direct questions, all I'm getting back from the Premier is more Liberal talking points and no answers for taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

Let me ask you again, Premier. I've asked you where you're going to find the \$1.5 billion in savings. You have dodged that question. Your education minister is now saying you're backing away from the Drummond recommendation with respect to the hard cap on class sizes; that is \$500 million in savings. And your education minister is backing away from the Drummond recommendation to eliminate 70% of non-teaching staff; that's a further \$600 million. So your education minister now is taking an additional \$1.1 billion off the table. Combined with full-day kindergarten, that's \$2.6 billion, Premier.

Don't you have an obligation to tell us where you're going to find those savings? Are you going to increase taxes? Please tell us exactly where you stand if you're taking those three items off the table.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we do have an obligation, and we will respond to that in the budget. I keep saying that to my honourable colleague.

What we're looking for at this point in time is the best advice that the opposition parties, and Ontarians in general, may have to offer. So I say again: Give us your best advice. Allow us to move this work into a legislative committee so that all members can make representations and so that we can hear from the people of Ontario. The Minister of Finance will continue his pre-budget consultations. I think we all have a responsibility, as members of provincial Parliament, to hear from our own constituents and bring all that wisdom to bear on the final product. So I say to my honourable colleague, I look forward to receiving his advice.

1050

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. For years, the Premier argued that corporate tax giveaways and an unfair HST were necessary if we were going to compete with other provinces like British Columbia. He claimed, in fact, that Ontario was leading the way and that BC was scrambling to catch up. My question to the Premier is: Does he still have that opinion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I want to commend the government of British Columbia for modelling a new initiative on our healthy homes renovation tax credit that we're trying to move forward with here in Ontario. I would appreciate my colleague's support in regard to that particular measure.

One of the things that we have committed to is, we have put forward a number of principles which will inform our approach that we're going to take in dealing with our deficit. We said we're going to protect health care and education. We're going to reject across-the-board cuts. We've insisted that reforms must get better

value for money by improved efficiency and greater productivity. I say again to my honourable colleague that we've also specifically said no to tax increases. We will not be taking money out of an economy we're trying to get going. Finally, we will not pursue austerity measures that hurt the economy. Those are the principles that will guide us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As the Premier knows, British Columbia abandoned the HST last year, and yesterday BC's Minister of Finance announced that they're prepared to raise the corporate tax rate to help fight the deficit in that province. Now, the fact is that even the Liberals in BC are realizing that they've invested enough in corporate tax giveaways and that it's actually time to start looking at other options.

Is the Premier going to start waking up to that reality any time soon, or does he plan to continue to stand arm in arm with Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Harper to the bitter, bitter end?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't know if that's unparliamentary, Speaker, but I think it's on the line.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Bordering, bordering.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's bordering.

My honourable colleague has been nothing if not consistent in terms of her desire to raise taxes. One of the things she has been advocating, for example, is that we, at a minimum, freeze corporate taxes. Let's consider that, if you will, for just a moment.

If we were to do that, that would save us \$800 million. We need to save \$16 billion. So that proposal represents 5% of the solution. I've heard from my honourable colleague with respect to the first 5%, but what I'd ask her, on behalf of Ontarians, is: What do we do to solve the next 95% of the problem?

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, if he took my advice earlier, it would maybe be closer to \$20 billion in tax giveaways that he's given out already, but that's beside the point.

For three years, the Premier has promised Ontario families that tax giveaways to corporations were going to create jobs in Ontario, and for three years people have continued to watch good jobs leave Ontario. We've been more than competitive with other jurisdictions, with other provinces—more than 10 points lower in our corporate tax rate than the Great Lakes states—but that simply has not solved our problem in terms of jobs. We continue to see jobs leave the province.

Is the Premier finally ready to admit that the jobs plan that he has been trying to sell Ontarians simply isn't getting people back to work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we've gained some 300,000 jobs since the depth of the recession. We've more than made up for the jobs that we've lost. Last year, I believe we gained some 121,000 more jobs. We continue to create more jobs in Ontario than any other province, of course.

My honourable colleague, I know, is wed to the concept of taxes. As I said specifically, if we hold the line on corporate taxes and we don't proceed with the next reduction, that saves us \$800 million. We have a \$16-billion challenge. Eight hundred million dollars is only 5% of the solution. So again I say to my honourable colleague: What about the remaining 95%? We'd love to hear, and I'm sure Ontarians would want to hear, about a comprehensive, thorough plan to address a \$16-billion deficit.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I can't account for the folly of the Premier's ways over the last couple of years with his commitment to corporate tax cuts that haven't gotten us anywhere, but nonetheless, my next question is to the Premier.

In November 2010, the Ministry of Health informed MPPs on the Standing Committee on Estimates that an operational review of Ornge had just been completed. Somehow, this review didn't flag any of the problems that have since been found at Ornge.

My question is a very simple one: Will the Premier have the minister table that review that she spoke of at estimates to the public today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

You know, I think the people of Ontario have three questions they want answers to. The first one is: If someone I love, or even if I, need an air ambulance, will it be there for me? The answer to that is: Absolutely, yes. Ontario has one of the finest air ambulance services in the world, and it continues to strengthen.

The second question that people have is: What did you do when you discovered there was a problem at Ornge? Speaker, the answer to that is that I sent in a forensic audit team. I told them to follow the public money. I replaced the CEO, replaced the entire board at Ornge. I worked co-operatively with the Auditor General and, in fact, I have asked the Auditor General to release his report as quickly as he can under section 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I thought it was a pretty simple question, which is: Would the minister make available for review today the report that they spoke of back in 2010 in November? I certainly didn't hear an answer to that question.

Last summer, in response to a freedom-of-information request, the Ministry of Health confirmed that they possessed documents at that time concerning Dr. Chris Mazza's salary at Ornge—but they refused to release those documents. Can the minister make those documents public today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I want to speak to the people of Ontario. They want to know what we've done to fix the problems. We appointed a forensic audit team. They had a team of over 30 people working for

several weeks. They submitted an interim report which led me to the very unhappy conclusion that it was time to involve the Ontario Provincial Police. Let me tell you, Speaker, that is a step that no minister takes lightly, but it's vitally important to get to the bottom of this, to get the facts on the table so that justice is done.

I respect the work of the Ontario Provincial Police. I want them to do a full job. They will do a thorough job, and that is vitally important.

When the new board was put in place, I gave them three instructions. The first priority has to be patient safety, and they've taken important steps in that direction. The second thing is—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the minister is asking us to believe an unbelievable story. They've been sitting on information about Ornge that they refuse to share with a sceptical public. In November 2010, the minister dodged committee questions about Ornge, promising to look into it. Five months later, she dodged questions in the House, promising to look into it.

Now, these problems were first flagged by whistle-blowers back in 2008. In most jobs, when you tell people you're solving a problem and then you never actually do it—you never actually get to the solving of the problem—you actually don't get to keep your job. Does the minister think she should be keeping hers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The reason the salary information was not released was because we did not have it, and that is why we are moving forward to strengthen accountability at Ornge, to make sure this situation is fixed and does not happen again.

Speaker, we are bringing in a stronger performance agreement with Ornge. The elements of that include: that any changes to the corporate structure require the minister's approval; that all employees will be subject to the Broader Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act; and that we will have much more oversight and require much more transparency when it comes to the financial issues at Ornge. Ornge will have quality improvement requirements, just like our hospitals do; they will have a patient advocate, just like our hospitals do; we will have debt control provisions to ensure that any debt increases do not happen without approval. We're fixing the problem.

1100

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Speaker, we want to speak to the public as well. We want to speak to the public about what the minister has not done when it comes to the Ornge scandal.

She was first told about this in November at a committee hearing and promised to get back to members of the Legislature with responses. She didn't do anything. She was again warned, on three different occasions, in this House in April 2011. She promised to look into it; she did nothing.

On May 4, 2011, the minister received a five-page letter from the Ontario Air Transport Association listing numerous failures on the part of Ornge to comply with competitive procurement practices and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: —“compromised patient care and created serious personnel and cost issues for hospitals.” What did she do? Nothing.

I ask the minister this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member.

Interjections.

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

Now again, I remind: When I say “answer” or “question,” you only have a few seconds to finish it. Please get to that point. When I stand, you sit down.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, perhaps the member opposite thinks that the minute he asked a question in question period, I should've gone directly to the police. I don't agree with that. I think there was an important due diligence to follow before we got to that point—and we did that due diligence, which took us to where we are today.

The people of Ontario want to have confidence in our air ambulance service. I can tell you that yesterday, Speaker, 61 patients were transferred using air ambulance. They travelled over 30,000 kilometres, bringing people to the care they needed. The work that Ornge does is so vitally important in our health care system. It's vital that we move quickly to strengthen oversight at Ornge. That is why we're going to be introducing legislation, Speaker, that will entrench in law oversight and requirements that Ornge—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, had the minister done her job three years ago, two years ago, one year ago, there would be no need for a criminal investigation today. It's a fact that the minister didn't do her job.

Unfortunately, it's now up to whistle-blowers to provide oversight of our air ambulance service. Here's the latest report that I received just yesterday: The London helicopter was out of service four nights in a row last week because there were no pilots. The Sudbury helicopter was out of service for three of those same nights for the same reason. I have a list of 13 other incidents over the last few weeks; I'll ask a page to take them over to the minister. They deal with incidents such as this: a helicopter sent to the wrong hospital in London, resulting in a lost bed for a pediatric patient due to a three-hour delay on the part of Ornge. A London helicopter sent to Simcoe helipad that had no lights because the dispatch department didn't know it.

I ask the Premier this: Is this the kind of decisive action that you expect from your minister, or will you ask her—

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. What I can tell you is that every complaint that is made when it comes to Ornge is investigated. That is a clear responsibility of Ornge.

What I can tell you: When we put the new board of directors in place at Ornge, we paid special attention to patient safety. Ian Delaney, an impeccable business leader in Ontario—internationally, actually—is the chair of Ornge. Charles Harnick is on the board. Patricia Lang is the former president of Confederation College. Dr. Barry McLellan, who's the president and CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital and an expert in trauma care, is personally taking responsibility for safety issues at Ornge. Maneesh Mehta, Speaker, is on the board—Patrice Merrin and Patricia Volker. This is a top-notch board who takes their responsibility extremely seriously, Speaker, and I have every confidence that—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, M. le Président. Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

I think it is now clear to anybody looking that a lack of accountability was at the heart of the province's agreement with Ornge. In 2010, in a letter to our party that was copied to the minister, Ornge justified their refusal to release executive salaries, saying they are "free from restrictions" and "able to pursue whatever business model its board deems appropriate," whether for-profit, not-for-profit. It didn't matter.

The minister has been responsible for overseeing Ornge for the last two years—overseeing the Ornge agreement as well. Is it safe to say that in her view, this agreement became unacceptable once it hit the front page of the paper?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no question that with the benefit of hindsight, all of us agree that the original performance agreement was not strong enough. It did not provide the transparency and accountability that we demand today. That is why we're bringing in a new performance agreement.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, I'm hearing some really nice quiet while the questions are being put. It's very difficult to hear the answer. I'm asking the members on this side: Tone it down. I'd like to hear the answer, and so should you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You, sir, will be named the next time you do that to me. In the middle of a sentence, you speak when I'm standing? Not acceptable. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we are developing a new performance agreement with the new leader-

ship at Ornge, because the people of Ontario demand greater transparency and greater accountability. I demand greater transparency and greater accountability. The fact that our government was stonewalled by the people at Ornge when we investigated questions and we were not provided with answers; when the Auditor General was stonewalled in his request for information; that led to this chain of events that takes us to where we are today.

The important thing, Speaker, is that we move forward with a stronger performance agreement so this—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be very interesting to get to the bottom of who knew what when, because in January 2011, there is a letter to your ministry from Ornge that says, and here, again, I quote: They are "seeking nothing from the government except to make it aware of what it has done and is intending to do" with their for-profit pursuit. They were telling the government that they could do whatever they wished with \$150 million that the taxpayers were giving them.

This should have raised red flags to anybody; to any minister who's doing her job. This should have raised red flags, along with everything else that had been going on: the questioning that had been going on in the House, at estimates. The letters that were piling up from Ornge saying, "We don't have to give you any information," happened in 2010.

Why, after two years of doing nothing, does the minister believe that she should keep her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Because, Speaker, when Ornge was established back in 2005, there was a hope, there was a dream that Ontario's world-class air ambulance service was a product that could be commercialized and sold internationally. That was what we were trying to do at that time.

In hindsight, Speaker, the accountability agreement, the performance agreement, was not strong enough, and the other component, of course, was that the leadership at Ornge—a handful of senior executives—forgot that their first responsibility was to the people of Ontario; their first responsibility was to deliver air ambulance care to people who desperately need that air ambulance service.

So that is why, going forward, we are winding down all of the for-profit entities. That is the work of the board. They are doing that as we speak.

JOB CREATION

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Despite the resurgence in the auto industry and the shift toward green energy manufacturing in Windsor and Essex, people in my riding are in need of jobs. Jobs and economic development continue to be the priority. It's well documented that the unemployment rate in Windsor-Sarnia is higher than the provincial average. In January, unemployment was 9.7% compared to provincial 7.4%, and of course Windsor continues to have a very high

unemployment rate. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation please explain what is being done to create jobs in southwestern Ontario, an area particularly hard hit by the recession?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: The McGuinty government recognizes the priority of job creation across the province. And we've acknowledged, as the member just said in her question, that this is a region of particular need. That's why we are committed to creating the southwestern Ontario development fund, modelled after our successful eastern Ontario development fund, which is leveraging \$500 million from the \$53 million that we've invested so far and has created and is retaining 11,700 jobs. The southwestern development fund will leverage much-needed private sector funds and create much-needed jobs in southwestern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, this bill's presently before the House. If passed, it will establish the southwestern development fund as a permanent economic development tool for southwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Speaker, I understand that thorough consultations have been taking place throughout southwestern Ontario. The meeting in Windsor was well attended and very positive. The feedback I'm hearing in my riding from my constituents is that we need jobs and the investments. They need this fund and they need it now. Can the minister assure my constituents that the southwest economic development fund is on track to be in place this spring?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That is my expectation, Mr. Speaker. The only thing standing in the way of those important jobs and those important investments would be if the opposition should decide not to support the bill that is before this House. And I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was a little concerned to hear the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex say during second reading debate yesterday—this is what he said—“My riding [has] been especially hard hit with the downturn of the manufacturing sector. My constituents are coming to me every day, asking why the McGuinty government is doing nothing to repair the economy and nothing to turn things around in southwestern Ontario and help get people back to work.” Mr. Speaker, that's just wrong. The member knows we're taking action in southwestern Ontario to create jobs, to attract investment. He's got to be straight with his constituents. He and his leader are standing in the way of that important—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The tradition of this place is not to reference anybody else when the question period is on, so I will try to remind you that you're answering the question for your colleague.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health, Speaker. There is something called the emergency health services

branch at the Ministry of Health. Can the minister tell us how many people are employed there and what their mandate is?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will certainly be happy to get that information for the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, this is confounding. Not only does the minister not know what is going on at Ornge; she doesn't know what's going on in her own ministry departments. Here is what the emergency health services branch does, according to the website: It is the strategic manager of the land and air ambulance system for the province of Ontario. It is responsible for ensuring the existence throughout Ontario of a balanced, seamless and integrated system of ambulance services and communication services.

I want to know this: What have the more than 100 staff, the assistant deputy minister and the deputy minister, who are responsible for this platoon of overseers, been doing while the scandal at Ornge has been brewing and why doesn't she know that they even exist?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm just going to let that sit. The member opposite will know that I've had meetings with that branch in particular. They have been working extremely hard throughout this whole process. In fact, it is thanks to the good work of the people at the emergency services management branch that we are developing this new performance agreement. I can tell you that the people at that branch, headed up by the very capable Patricia Lee, have been working very hard to get the information that we need. And it is thanks to them that we are where we are today, which is moving forward with a strong performance agreement, moving forward with new legislation.

I hope the member opposite will commit to supporting the new legislation that we will be introducing, which will bring transparency and oversight to Ornge.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, through you, this question is to the Premier. The health minister claims that she knew nothing, that she heard nothing, about Ornge. We all know that this is not the case. As we've heard today, in 2008, the province was warned about this. An accountant told the province that Ornge was handing out money like water. In 2010, Howard Hampton asked the health minister: Why is it that Mr. Mazza's salary is not being disclosed? In 2011, the members of the opposition raised this issue in this House, asking the health minister to do something about what was happening at Ornge.

After the minister was repeatedly warned about this issue, how can she say that she has done her job?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm doing my job because I'm fixing the problems at Ornge, and that is exactly what the people of this province expect me to do.

Let's review again what it is that we're fixing. We have brought in new leadership, a new CEO and an excellent new board. We have been working with the forensic audit team, the Auditor General and now the Ontario Provincial Police. We have brought in new oversight and new safety protocols.

The most important thing is this: If someone you know, someone you love, needs an air ambulance, is it going to be there for you? And the answer to that is: Absolutely, yes. The next most important thing is: Are your taxpayer dollars being used to provide patient care? That is the issue that we gave to the forensic audit team and we have charged the Ontario Provincial Police with, and they have accepted the responsibility for that investigation. Speaker—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, again, through you, to the Premier: How can the Minister of Health say that she has been doing her job? When she has known about this issue for at least three years, how can she say that she has been doing her job? In fact, the only thing that's transparent in this government is the lack of oversight and accountability. We know that executives at Ornge have been lining their pockets for years and we know the Minister of Health has ignored repeated warnings.

The former Minister of Health didn't get to keep his job after the eHealth scandal. Why should this minister be able to keep hers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have taken the responsible action every step of the way.

I do want to take this opportunity, however, to remind all people who work in health care across this province that, if they have a responsibility to provide patient care and if they are entrusted with tax dollars, they have a responsibility to remember every single day what that responsibility is. They have to remember every single day who it is they're there to serve. Very occasionally, we get someone in a leadership position who forgets that they have a fundamental, sacred responsibility to the people of this province. This is a good opportunity to remind everyone who works in health care and beyond that people are trusting you to do your job. Live up to that trust.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, Ontario's clean energy economy is helping the province to replace dirty coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of energy. Our investments in clean energy are creating jobs and cleaning up the air we breathe, ensuring that our children and grandchildren have a bright and healthy future. Our clean energy economy has also brought in \$27 billion in private sector investment and created over 20,000 jobs in the province.

The feed-in tariff review that is currently taking place is expected to build on the success of the program and to

help grow Ontario's clean energy economy. I know that my constituents are eager to see the review and learn about the enhancements to the FIT program.

Minister, can you please tell this House when the FIT two-year review will be complete?

1120

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for the question. It is enormously important because we want to keep the momentum that's been generated. We believe in clean energy, clean air and clean energy jobs, so we've conducted a very extensive consultation approach. We're working as hard as we can.

I'm really hoping that toward the end of the first quarter we'll be able to speak to this in more detail, but we want to keep the momentum of those 20,000 jobs touching every part of the province. We want to keep the investment coming into the province. We want to keep protecting the health of Ontarians, generating jobs for local communities and producing a clean energy source for today, for tomorrow and for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. I'm looking forward to reading the review.

I know that the review is considering a wide range of issues, such as the FIT price schedule, rules around clean energy procurement, the role of new technologies in Ontario's electricity system, and the renewable approvals process. These are very important aspects of our extremely successful FIT program, and I know there's room for improvement.

Minister, my constituents are concerned that changes to the program will make an impact on both ratepayers and our clean energy economy. They would like to know what is being done to bring prices down while maintaining the necessary investments in our North-America-leading clean energy economy.

Can you please tell us what is being done to ensure that the FIT two-year review balances the interests of the Ontario consumer with the need to create jobs in our clean energy economy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member has spoken very eloquently to the balance to make sure that you have a strong foundation—a strong foundation for jobs, a good amount of clean energy coming in and protection of the ratepayer.

You know, we heard from 2,900 individuals and organizations online; 130 separate submissions apart from online; over 100 meetings—a lot of good advice covering the wide spectrum. We want to make sure we have a solid foundation to grow those 20,000 jobs to 50,000, to encourage even more investment in the province of Ontario, to make sure we protect the ratepayer and to build a foundation for the next generation of innovative jobs for the future.

The world is going green. Ontario wants to be a leader. The jobs are for leaders, not followers.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Finance. It's no wonder the McGuinty Liberals are on track for a \$30-billion deficit. Minister, after eight painful years of Liberal mismanagement, I expect that you would like to find areas where you could eliminate waste, maintain jobs and save money.

The College of Trades is asking you for \$31 million this year so that you can continue to destroy jobs in the skilled trades and construction industry. They are doing this by creating compulsory certification of existing construction trades, no grandfathering of tradesmen in these trades and a biased review of a distorted ratio system.

When will you do what is right and scrap this looming boondoggle that you call the College of Trades?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government is very proud of our record of doubling the number of apprenticeships in Ontario. I can assure the member opposite that we will continue to make important investments in job skills and training. It is essential to the growing economy of the future as we move forward.

That party's approach to cutting back in training, colleges and universities is wrong-headed, it's the wrong direction and it's inconsistent both with Drummond and with what most proper-thinking people in Ontario feel about post-secondary education.

We'll continue to make the important investments in apprenticeships and apprenticeship training to build a better future for Ontario and all of our people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Minister, we know you have favours to repay, but surely you understand that the governance or the proposed membership requirements of the College of Trades is not representative of the industries here in Ontario. Transferring one more penny to this group is like telling thousands of businesses and construction workers they are not wanted in this province and you intend to destroy their jobs.

By allowing this college to expand compulsory certification and without the grandfathering of tradesmen with decades of experience, that will be the death of tens of thousands of jobs right here in this province.

Minister, will you do what is right—kill the College of Trades now—or will Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have to do it for you and save thousands of jobs right here in the province of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I let the question finish. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the one part: the word that he used about the government.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm not sure what I'm withdrawing, but I'll withdraw it.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I can just start by quoting a former colleague, a former member from Brant—a member of the party opposite—who said very articulately and accurately, Mr.

Speaker: “Instead of being critical of the process, what they”—the lobbyists—“should do” in the party opposite is “become an active part of the process and feed us as much information as they feel that they need to convince the independent panel of adjudicators that the ratios should be set in the way they feel.” He has gone on, and points out that only 34 of the 150 trades have journeymen ratios, and has supported it.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting now with the College of Trades, with almost every sector, and I can't find people out in industry or in labour or in training who are not supporting it. We have 80% of our trades now that have one-to-one ratios. We have gone from 60,000 to 120,000 people in the trades—and 30,000 people every year. This is twice as good a record as the party opposite had when they were in power.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Yesterday, the Premier complained about changes to Toronto's transit plans. He made it seem like Toronto's city council can't make up its mind on transit, but it's the McGuinty government that gutted Transit City, the original plan, by \$4 billion in 2010. He then proceeded with the mayor's plan before council even had a chance to discuss it. Will the Premier stop pointing fingers and commit to move ahead now with light rail on Eglinton and Finch and renew the Sheppard RT, regardless of the decision on Sheppard?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We kind of expected that question, Mr. Speaker, from the opposition.

Since 2003, our government has invested \$13.4 billion in public transit, more than \$6 billion enhancing GO Transit and more than \$3.8 billion in the TTC. We have a very strong transit-first Toronto Liberal caucus. They advocated for and were successful in obtaining \$8.4 billion to invest in the city of Toronto's transit.

We need a partner to implement that, and all we're saying is: Honour the memorandum of understanding, which said it was conditional on approval by city council in Toronto. We respect that cities are an order of government and we respect that they have the obligation to partner with us and to act responsibly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier: He says he's impatient with the city of Toronto, but Toronto transit users, we're impatient with the McGuinty government. Lack of support has contributed to fare hikes and to service cuts in the city, and the Premier's acceptance of the Ford plan without due diligence has further delayed transit expansion. Will the Premier stop pointing fingers and commit now to construct light rail on Eglinton and Finch and to renew the Scarborough RT?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our government has been extremely supportive of the TTC and the city of Toronto,

and all things transit. As I've mentioned, we put \$8.4 billion on the table. We've had strong advocates in our caucus who have convinced this government to invest \$8.4 billion. We negotiated, firstly with the previous administration in the city of Toronto and subsequently with the new administration. We listened to what they wanted. We partnered with them. We simply made it conditional on approval of city council. City council has the authority to make that decision, not the mayor. So we simply asked them to get the authority of council to enable us to partner with them to spend \$8.4 billion in their city.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Many young people are coming up to the end of their final high school year and are giving serious consideration to what kind of studies they should focus on as they prepare for their careers. Many of these students are starting to research potential employment opportunities and employers before making the final decision on what field of study they should focus on.

1130

Some young people in my riding are concerned, though, about barriers they might face once they enter the workforce. Just recently, I have read that the Ontario public service has received a number of top employer standards. Could the minister explain what this means and could mean to young people in my riding and in all of Ontario who are considering a career in the Ontario public service?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to take this question from my colleague for York South–Weston.

I'm also very, very pleased to inform the House that in the last three years, the Ontario public service has received numerous recognitions from outside organizations. Let me just name some of them. The OPS has become one of Canada's top 100 employers, one of Canada's best employers for new Canadians, and very recently, the OPS has been named as Canada's best diversity employer. We have got this recognition five years in a row. This award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the people who work in the OPS, and their leadership.

I also want to say that this is also a testament to our ongoing efforts to build an inclusive, supportive and barrier-free workplace that reflects the diversity of the Ontarians we serve. I would like to encourage all the young people to consider the OPS as a viable option for their careers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Again, my question is to the Minister of Government Services. It is encouraging to know that these types of programs are in place, and I'm glad that the Minister of Government Services is championing diversity through his ministry and ensuring that

the hard-working employees in the OPS are representative of the people we serve. Creating a barrier-free workplace is important for anyone exploring a career in today's society.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to many groups of people in my riding who appreciate and would benefit from programs just like this in their employment sectors. I would like to ask the minister if he could share some details of the specific programs currently available to encourage an open and inclusive Ontario public service that serves all Ontarians.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just start by saying that the OPS is composed of hard-working Ontarians with unique backgrounds, experience and perspectives.

Let me just talk about three programs that we have. One is the mentorship program, which allows new employees to work with the established leadership to learn good practices in the OPS. The other is the OPS Inclusion Lens, which helps to identify potential barriers when developing policies, programs and services. We also have a program which we call "quiet places," where employees of diverse backgrounds can go to observe and practise their faith.

But at the same time, we want to make sure that people of all diversity are actually recognized in the OPS as well. Respecting each other's diversity, experience and talents allows us to achieve great things for Ontarians together.

I would like to ask all the members in the House to join me in congratulating the OPS for their tremendous contribution.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. The Drummond report finds cuts and savings in many areas, but it ignores the pain to families caused by your Green Energy Act.

Mr. Drummond has thrown up his hands and told Ontarians to open their wallets even wider and pay even more for energy that's already too expensive. Despite what the Auditor General told us, you're telling us it's okay to force expensive wind and solar onto the grid, creating surplus power we sell at a loss, and higher energy bills for our seniors.

Premier, how can you tell Ontario families who can barely afford their energy bills now to just sit back and take it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We are committed absolutely to clean energy, clean air and clean energy jobs. We know the health care costs from burning dirty coal. We know they invested in dirty coal when they were in government. We know they invested in more dirty air, but the huge health care costs—\$4 billion a year for the health care system and the environment—are not worth it. It's not worth it. It's not worth it.

So we've launched the Green Energy Act and we've not only been able to clean up the air, we've not only made a commitment to get out of coal; we've shown leadership for the world. The world is investing in Ontario. We got jobs for Ontarians.

And I wouldn't be surprised, Speaker, if the member opposite, before he got here, was in favour of clean energy. I wouldn't be surprised if he took some initiatives in his own jurisdiction to talk about how important clean energy was to the future of the people of his community and the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, let me remind our friends that it was our party that asked for and initiated the closing of coal plants in Ontario. Now the Liberals are replacing coal with natural gas because wind turbines generate at night; they make power when we don't need it. So the bloated subsidies which clearly pay for energy we don't need are adding billions of dollars to our costs. No wonder the McGuinty Liberals have a \$30-billion deficit coming.

Premier, it's time to admit that your energy plan has failed. Will you please cancel the FIT program now, and restore clean, reliable, affordable energy for Ontario families and businesses?

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. And, you know, affordability is enormously important: affordability of energy, affordability when you consider the \$4 billion a year that we were spending in health and environmental costs. When the party opposite was in power, they might have had a plan on paper, but they increased the use of coal by 127%. They were burning it, and when they ran out of coal generation they added diesel generators in communities like mine. We're all in favour of clean air, surely. We're all in favour of the thousands of jobs it brings, surely. We're all in favour of clean air. In fact, if I go to North Bay now, I wouldn't be surprised, if I go to city hall, if I saw solar panels on the roof, and I would ask, who was the mayor who put solar panels on the roof at city hall?

Interjections.

FIRE SAFETY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Proceed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I'm standing. He's getting the question. Member?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. Minister, you will know that last year in the city of Timmins there was a disastrous fire at Rainbow Suites, one of the seniors' residences in the city of Timmins. Unfortunately, the life of Madame Levesque

was lost in that fire. Here we are about 11 months after the fact and there has yet to be an inquiry as to what we can learn from what happened in that fire so it's not repeated, not only in the city of Timmins but across this province.

My question to you is simply this: When will you call that inquiry so that we can make sure the tragedy that happened at Rainbow Suites and the passing of Madame Levesque as a result of that fire doesn't happen anywhere else in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much. That's a very important question and I'm sorry to see what happened, you know, with this lady, Madame Levesque, and all those who have been suffering from this incident. However, I don't call the inquiry. The fire marshal is independent. If need be, there will be an inquiry, but it's going to be called by him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ACTON EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr. Ted Arnott: A few days ago, my constituents were surprised and disappointed to learn that the employment resource centre in Acton is slated for closure. This local employment counselling service, funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and delivered by Links2Care, has helped countless Acton and area residents with job searches and resumé writing. The work they do creates hope where there was once despair and turns lives around for the better when clients hear the simple words, "You got the job."

Upon hearing the news of the pending closure of the Acton Employment Resource Centre, I immediately wrote to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to protest. Subsequently on February 9, the town of Halton Hills council passed a resolution which strongly supported the Acton jobs centre.

Let's remember that many people who are out of work in Acton don't have cars and there is no public transit in Acton. I dropped in to the Acton jobs centre unannounced on February 15, meeting some of the staff and one of the clients who spoke in glowing terms about the help she's receiving.

In today's uncertain economy, with its stubborn high unemployment rate, a jobs plan should be one of the government's highest priorities, and helping the residents of a community like Acton should be part of that jobs plan.

What will the minister do to ensure the residents of Acton continue to have access to local job counselling services?

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit the community of Attawapiskat. There, I met wonderful children filled with hope and joy—Lisa Marie, a mother of four, Pauline, a grandmother taking care of her grandchild, and Whalen, a seven-year-old, all whom I befriended. I told them I would not forget about them, and neither should this Legislature. Some improvements are on the way, but the job is nowhere near being done.

I also want to highlight another community in need, a community that has been devastated, requesting government assistance to address several shortfalls with respect to not one but two water treatment plants within one community. Welcome to the township of the North Shore.

Our leader brought attention to this issue almost a year ago—for the last 10 years, no response, no involvement, no follow-up, no returned calls, nothing, nothing, nothing.

Complaints have been made to several ministries, and the only response received thus far is further water testing, fees and charges. By the way, the township continues to struggle with the operating costs, and community members continue to pay fees for water they cannot drink or safely bathe their children in, because for the past 10 years they've been under a boil-water advisory.

This once closely knit community has been torn apart due to the inaction of this government. Friendships have been broken and the community spirit extinguished.

The township of the North Shore and the people are desperate for help, assistance and leadership from this government. It's time for action.

FAMILY DAY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Through times of plenty and when times are tough, one thing that stays constant is Ontarians' willingness to work hard together, building a better future for ourselves and our families. But Ontarians know we can't just work for our families; it's important to take a step back from our increasingly busy lives and spend time with the ones we love.

The McGuinty government knows the importance of having a balanced work life and a balanced home life, and our government understands the value of strong families.

That's why, in 2007, we committed to introducing a new holiday in February to honour Ontario's families. On Monday, people across this province happily celebrated Ontario's fifth annual Family Day.

New Year's to Easter can be a long, cold stretch. In the dark of a frigid February, there's nothing better than the warmth of loved ones, so I was happy to see so many families in my riding of York Centre and across our province out skating together or tobogganing together or going to museums together or playing board games together. Family Day is a day to forget about the pressure of the workweek and spend some quality and relaxing time with the people who are most important in our lives.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has stayed true to its commitment to make life better for workers and families in Ontario, and I know that this holiday will continue to be celebrated by a generation of families to come.

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2012

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm proud to rise to help spread the word about the town of Prescott and its quest for the Kraft Hockeyville title. There's plenty to be excited about in the fort town today. The St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival is preparing for its 10th anniversary season. There are many events planned as part of the bicentennial of the War of 1812 in and around the national historic site of Fort Wellington.

But it's the Hockeyville competition that has the people up in Prescott and the South Grenville area fired up this winter. There is a long and storied hockey tradition in Prescott, beginning with our own Hockey Hall of Famer, Leo Boivin. Known for delivering thundering bodychecks, this hard-hitting blueliner played more than 1,000 NHL games and was captain of the Boston Bruins. This year, the triple A midget tournament that proudly bears his name marks its milestone 40th anniversary. The tournament has welcomed over 5,000 players in the historic town, including future NHL all-stars like Doug Gilmore, Steve Yzerman and Eric Lindros. As they do each year, they'll drop the puck on those games in the Leo Boivin Community Centre which, like so many rinks, could use the \$100,000 in renovations that goes to the Hockeyville champ.

The momentum in Prescott is growing already. They have more than 3,000 members on the town's Hockeyville site, almost 1,300 more than any other Ontario community. Recently, they had a rally and parade, and they had over 250 people out.

I'm hoping everyone across Leeds-Grenville and, as a tribute to Leo Boivin, fans will join me in making sure Prescott is among the 15 finalists announced on Hockey Night in Canada on March 3.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Since 1971, Ontario Place has been a family-oriented destination for the people of Ontario and especially for my riding of Trinity-Spadina. Recently, Premier McGuinty decided to shut down this facility. The government has been remarkably silent about their vision for this 96-acre park, but they seem alarmingly receptive to the replacement of water slides and rides with slot machines and roulette wheels.

I am opposed to a casino at Ontario Place. It's a bankrupt idea. The residents of my riding do not want a casino. Councillors Mike Layton and Adam Vaughan, both from my riding, have also expressed their opposition to a casino.

The Premier should know that residents in my riding, in High Park, in Toronto-Danforth, in Davenport and,

might I add, Toronto Centre will fight the proposal to build a casino in their neighbourhood. I urge the government to listen to them and back down on the proposal.

Ontario Place increased visits last year by almost 100%. Let those improvements continue, and let John Tory come back with ideas to revitalize Ontario Place. But our community is adamant: We say, “Ca-Si-No.”

Ontario Place was dedicated to the people of Ontario—past, present and future. It would be a terrible mistake to replace an affordable family destination with one that caters to gamblers instead.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today on behalf of residents of Scarborough Southwest to express our strong opposition to the proposed development of the quarry lands. The quarry lands is an area in my riding on which a private developer called the Conservatory Group has been attempting to build multiple high-rise buildings. I've spoken on this matter before and will continue to do so in this House, because what I believe is at stake is nothing less than the manner in which we build safe and healthy communities in Ontario.

The developer is seeking to build a high-rise tower complex in a community of predominantly single-family homes. Of prime concern is that this land is a contaminated brownfield area.

1510

Residents, led by the longstanding group Concerned Citizens of Quarry Lands Development, have serious and legitimate concerns over the consequences of a development of this size. The proposed development will result in a density of more than seven times greater than the surrounding community. In my view, this is not responsible development and should be reconsidered.

If the builder proceeds with the development, I'll ask that the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing both look into this matter and take immediate steps to ensure the safety of area residents and to promote the development of a healthy and visionary plan for these lands and for all the surrounding community.

ADAM HOLMES

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I recognize a true hero following the award of the Canadian Medal of Military Valour to Master Bombardier Adam Holmes of Delhi.

A member of Yankee Battery, 2nd Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, Holmes is the son of David and Kay Holmes. He's a member of the 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group at CFB Petawawa.

He was cited for actions during a four-day battle in Afghanistan during his second tour of duty in the summer of 2010.

Stationed in the Arghandab district north of Kandahar city, Holmes helped train the Afghan military while serving as a forward combat soldier fighting in near-daily

enemy contact alongside the 101st US Airborne. Holmes and his colleagues fought in areas saturated with IEDs—improvised explosive devices—and in one fierce battle he fought at close quarters with Taliban before suffering serious leg and arm injuries in a mortar attack.

Mr. Holmes ignored risk to himself repeatedly, rescuing injured allied and Afghan soldiers in the middle of these firefights.

The commander of the 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, Col. Simon Hetherington, had this to say: “We are in awe of the courage and selflessness he showed that resulted in the award of this medal. His actions were truly inspiring and serve as an excellent example for all of us in uniform.”

ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF NORTH AMERICA

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise in the House today to talk about something really special that happened over the weekend.

As politicians, we're all used to hearing people complain about things, our constituents always telling us how things could be better. But over the weekend, something really special happened in my riding because, instead of complaining, 1,000 people came out to actually do something. We held what was called a walkathon, which was organized by the Muslim community of Mississauga and the Islamic Circle of North America, Peel chapter. They raised \$60,000 for the local hospital, which is the Credit Valley Hospital and Trillium Health Centre.

This is something fantastic because this is an example of, instead of complaining, people coming together to do something for their community. I think this is Canada at its best, especially on Family Day.

They organized it as a walkathon so that families could participate, so that grandparents, parents and children could all participate in this. It was really nice to see some strollers there as well.

I'm absolutely delighted that this took place in my riding, in Mississauga East–Cooksville, and I would like to thank the organizers.

I also want to mention that last year they raised \$50,000, this year they raised \$60,000, and I'm looking forward to them raising a lot more next year.

JOE BAHRO

ALBERT CORACE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's great to be able to rise today to talk about two very important people from the village of Manotick in my great riding of Nepean–Carleton.

Manotick, Mr. Speaker, is known as the jewel of the Rideau. It has Watson's Mill and Dickinson Square, and it was home to Sir John A. Macdonald's first campaign headquarters.

It was also home to two fine men who contributed greatly to our community, and both passed away in 2011.

I would like to name Albert Corace, as well as Joe Bahro, in this House as part of Ontario's rich history. The two men, who passed last year, had great stories.

Joe Bahro was a member of the Legion and he was also a Lion. He spent a lot of time fundraising for our community. He was also known on occasion to take me in parades in his beautiful yellow Parisienne. He leaves behind his wife, Jean Bahro. A great lady, Jean. She is at home today, I think, watching this.

Albert was also a great guy. He came from the great United States, and he fit right in to our community with that great big booming Yankee voice of his. He was the president of our Kiwanis Club in Manotick when he passed away. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus. He too was known from time to time to drive me in a parade on a hot summer Ottawa day.

He leaves behind his lovely wife, Claudette, who decided very early after her husband passed away that she would resume his duties as president of our local Kiwanis Club.

Mr. Speaker, I know I speak on behalf of every member of this assembly to say that the best part of our job is meeting with the people in our communities. And I can also say with a heavy heart that the worst part of our job is when we lose those wonderful people who make up more than the bricks and mortar of our communities ever could.

I say to the Corace and Bahro families, my sincere condolences.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House of the following exchange in order of precedence for private members' public business: Ms. Thompson assumes ballot item number 17, and Ms. Munro assumes ballot item number 69.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Am I still 75? Did I win the lottery again?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope you're not assuming that there is a conspiracy here, Gilles.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There is.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Mrs. Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court

security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

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.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ISAAC BROCK DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DU MAJOR-GÉNÉRAL SIR ISAAC BROCK

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario / Projet de loi 35, Loi visant à proclamer le 13 octobre de chaque année Jour du major-général Sir Isaac Brock en Ontario.

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. Steve Clark: The title of the bill explains it all. I also would like to thank again the member for Niagara Falls and the member for Welland for co-sponsoring the bill and also for some very favourable comments I received from the Minister of the Environment.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the Ontario Legislature for Black History Month. I join Canadians from coast to coast to celebrate the history, achievement and contributions of black Canadians.

1520

The story of black people in Canada is a narrative that began before the founding of the nation and is one that continues to be written with every passing day. The pulse of that story beats with rhythm and energy and is a part of the lifeblood of our country. That is why it is so fitting to set aside a period of time each year to revisit old chapters and to look towards new ones.

It was one Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the father of black history, who saw the importance of setting aside time to recognize the achievements of a people who were being

written out of history, whose stories were hidden from the textbooks and the library books, from the newspapers and media reports, and whose accomplishments and successes did not emerge to the forefront. It was that legacy that brought about Dr. Woodson's vision of blacks as keepers of their own history so it would not be lost and it would not be forgotten.

Today, Mr. Speaker, as Ontarians, we are all entrusted with being the custodians, protectors and promoters of each other's most important truths and identities. The history of black people in this land is a vital and exciting part of that collective trust.

We recognize the Ontario Black History Society, the archives of some of our history, and its president, Mrs. Rosemary Sadlier. However, we all have a shared responsibility in ensuring that the history of black Canadians is archived in every institution of learning, through libraries, newspapers, books and other mediums of record in the province of Ontario and in Canada.

Our history exists in the corridors of the Parliament of Canada, where Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine was the first black woman elected. In 1995, Dr. Augustine moved a motion supported by the Ontario Black History Society declaring February as Black History Month in Canada.

Others, such as Senator Don Meredith and those from across Canada—the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, former Governor General of Canada; Senators Donald Oliver and Anne Cools; and Honourable Marlene Jennings—have authored important chapters through the noble path of public service.

In the corridors of the Ontario Legislature: Honourable Lincoln Alexander, the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario; Mr. Leonard Braithwaite, the first black member elected; Mrs. Zanana Akande, the first black woman elected; and Dr. Alvin Curling and Mrs. Mary Anne Chambers were black members elected. Dr. Curling was the first black Canadian to hold a cabinet position in Ontario and the first black Speaker of the Ontario Legislature.

At Toronto city hall, William Peyton Hubbard was the first black Canadian to hold public office in a Canadian city, elected to city council in 1894. In our educational institutions, Dr. Avis Glaze blazed the trail, along with other black educators. In our hospitals, Dr. John Douglas Salmon was the first black chief of surgery in a Canadian hospital. In our courthouses, the appointment of Honourable Justice Aston Joseph Hall to the provincial court bench this year is notable. He sits as a role model for black youth throughout the province.

Ontario is home to individuals like Josiah Henson, who was the first black person featured on a Canadian stamp. He helped to establish the Dawn Settlement in Dresden, Ontario, as a refuge for former slaves after escaping through the Underground Railroad to Canada. The Dudley Laws of this world fought for equality and justice with shared determination and much personal sacrifice.

I certainly feel humbled to benefit from the sacrifices, vision and leadership of those individuals and other

trailblazers, as I too participate in the history of blacks in Ontario and in Canada. Last year, I became the first black woman re-elected as MPP in this Legislature.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Applause.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you.

Also, today, I sit with my colleague MPP Michael Coteau. He and I have also crossed another threshold together. This is the first time two black elected members are seated on the government side of this Ontario Legislature.

Applause.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As we celebrate Black History Month, these words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose memorial now stands tall in Washington, DC, are thought-provoking: "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." We all have a part to play in ensuring that not just black people but all people have the security of a just society.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I think it is apropos to read the closing lines from Maya Angelou's poem *Still I Rise*, which words are metaphoric to the resiliency of black people and our history:

Out of the huts of history's shame
 I rise
 Up from a past that's rooted in pain
 I rise
 I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
 Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
 Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
 I rise
 Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
 I rise
 Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
 I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
 I rise
 I rise
 I rise.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask all of you to join us today for a reception with the Premier to honour black history, with my co-host, Mr. Michael Coteau, MPP, at 6 p.m., right here in the Ontario Legislature in the government caucus room.

SÉCURITÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE

COMMUNITY SAFETY

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui devant l'Assemblée législative pour présenter la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des tribunaux, des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires, qui, si elle est adoptée, abrogera et remplacera la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics.

La nouvelle loi nous aidera à établir un juste équilibre entre la sécurité et les droits civils lorsque nous devons assurer la protection des palais de justice, des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires de l'Ontario.

The Public Works Protection Act previously allowed the province to designate any installation as a public work. Concerns were raised about whether the PWPA, which became law in 1939, is too broad and outdated. That legislation was passed at the outset of World War II, in an atmosphere of fear of sabotage of the province's power plants, dams, bridges and other critical public infrastructure.

In response, the government asked the Honourable Roy McMurtry, a former Ontario Chief Justice, to review the legislation. In his report, Mr. McMurtry recommended its repeal and replacement. Mr. Speaker, we are moving ahead on the recommendations of Mr. Justice McMurtry.

La nouvelle loi que nous présentons aujourd'hui, la Loi sur la sécurité des tribunaux, des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires, est plus moderne, transparente et axée sur les mesures de sécurité nécessaires dans les palais de justice, les installations nucléaires et les grandes centrales électriques.

Although the powers of the PWPA have not been used extensively, the time has come to modernize how Ontario protects some of its key infrastructure.

The PWPA is, however, relied on in limited circumstances. It is used on a daily basis to provide security for courts, nuclear facilities and certain electricity generating plants. In December 2010, the Ombudsman produced a report that raised important questions about how the PWPA works and how it was used at the time of the G20 summit in Toronto earlier that year.

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The McMurtry report recommended that the PWPA be repealed and that Ontario consider potential policy and security gaps as a result of its repeal. In response to Mr. McMurtry's report, the government conducted extensive consultations to determine what measures would be needed to ensure security, should the PWPA be repealed.

These consultations sought input and advice from representatives of nuclear operators and regulators, electricity producers, justice partners and municipalities. We also consulted with civil liberty advocates to be sure that the appropriate balance was struck between security and civil liberty.

The bill we are introducing today has broad consensus among all of those stakeholders. I would like to thank both the Ombudsman and Mr. McMurtry for their work on this important issue.

The proposed legislation would do the following three things: repeal the Public Works Protection Act, set out a legislative amendment to the Police Services Act to address court security, and set out stand-alone legislation respecting security at prescribed electricity generating and nuclear facilities.

La loi proposée est conforme aux pouvoirs conférés actuellement aux gardiens de sécurité des tribunaux en vertu de la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics. La loi octroie au personnel de sécurité les pouvoirs suivants, si l'exercice de ces pouvoirs est raisonnable afin de s'acquitter de ses responsabilités :

—exiger qu'une personne qui pénètre dans un palais de justice ou qui s'y trouve présente une pièce d'identité et fournisse des renseignements afin d'évaluer si elle représente un risque pour la sécurité;

—procéder à la fouille, sans mandat, d'une personne qui pénètre ou tente de pénétrer dans les lieux où se déroulent des instances judiciaires ou qui s'y trouve, ainsi qu'à la fouille de son véhicule et des autres biens dont elle a la garde ou le soin;

—procéder, sans mandat, en employant au besoin la force raisonnable, à la fouille d'une personne sous garde qui se trouve sur les lieux où se déroulent des instances judiciaires, ou qui est transportée à destination ou en provenance de ces lieux et à la fouille des biens dont elle a la garde ou le soin.

I would like to emphasize that the legislation does not compel a person entering or attempting to enter a courthouse to submit to a search, produce identification or provide information. A member of the public can simply walk away. However, if they persist in entering the courthouse after refusing to provide information or submit to a search, court security personnel can refuse entry and/or demand that the person leave the premises, and use reasonable force if necessary to exclude or remove the person. If a person continues to try to enter and/or refuses to leave, they could be arrested.

In terms of other facilities, we've narrowed the list of public works to electricity generating and nuclear facilities. The legislation will apply to "prescribed electricity generating facilities" and "prescribed nuclear facilities."

Unlike the PWPA, this act covers very limited categories of infrastructure. Prescribing any additional categories of infrastructure would require amendments to the act, as opposed to regulation. The process for changing an act is very transparent and open, and the content of any proposed amendments would be subject to public debate.

The act designates security personnel at these facilities as peace officers, with the power to request any person who wishes to enter or is on the premises to produce identification and provide information for the purposes of assessing the person's security risk; and search, upon consent, any person, property or vehicle entering or on the premises.

Comme les dispositions applicables à la sécurité des tribunaux, la loi n'oblige pas une personne à se soumettre à la fouille, à produire une pièce d'identité ou à fournir des renseignements. Elle peut décider de s'en aller.

Toutefois, si la personne insiste pour pénétrer dans les lieux après avoir refusé de fournir des renseignements ou de subir une fouille, le personnel de sécurité peut refuser de lui permettre de pénétrer dans les lieux ou lui ordonner de quitter, ou employer au besoin la force raisonnable pour l'empêcher d'y pénétrer ou la faire sortir. Si la personne continue d'essayer de pénétrer dans les lieux ou de refuser de quitter les lieux, elle peut être arrêtée.

There is one important aspect of the PWPA that we have not replicated. The PWPA gives guards the

authority to exercise their powers in the “approaches” to a public work. The “approach” to a facility was a concern for Justice McMurtry and civil liberties groups because it is vague and hard to define. Under our proposal, guards could exercise the specified powers only on the premises; these powers would not apply off the premises. Since the “approach” falls outside of the premises of the nuclear facility, any security issues should be addressed in partnership with the local police of that jurisdiction.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add that Ontario has long been a province in which human rights and civil liberties have been valued and celebrated. Our government recognizes that we have a responsibility to ensure that our courts and critical infrastructure are protected; however, we must always balance the need for security with a respect for civil liberties like the freedom of assembly and the principles of an open and transparent justice system. I believe that this legislation does indeed strike that necessary balance.

Notre gouvernement est bien conscient de sa responsabilité d'assurer la protection des tribunaux et de l'infrastructure essentielle. Toutefois, nous devons toujours veiller à établir un équilibre entre le besoin de sécurité et le respect des libertés civiles comme la liberté d'association et le principe d'un système judiciaire ouvert et transparent. Je crois que cette loi atteint justement le bon équilibre.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues in this House to support this legislation.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup, madame la Ministre.

Responses to the ministers' statements.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am honoured to have the opportunity to say a few words in recognition of Black History Month, and I want to thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa for sharing some of her time with me.

As many members of this House will recall, in 2008 I initiated and introduced a bill recognizing August 1 as Emancipation Day in Ontario, commemorating the day in 1834 when slavery was abolished in the British Empire, including, of course, Canada. That bill also had the distinction of being the first bill ever introduced in the Ontario Legislature to be jointly co-sponsored by members of different parties.

Three and a half years ago, I had attended a particularly meaningful and moving ceremony in the community of Glen Allan in Mapleton township in Wellington county. On that day, I joined former Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander to help unveil an Ontario Heritage Trust plaque to commemorate the Queen's Bush settlement. The best way to tell the story is to share the eloquent words that are written on the plaque:

“In the early 19th century, the vast unsettled area between Waterloo county and Lake Huron was known as the ‘Queen's Bush.’ More than 1,500 free and formerly enslaved blacks pioneered scattered farms throughout the Queen's Bush, starting in about 1820. Many settled along

the Peel and Wellesley township border with Glen Allan, Hawkesville and Wallenstein as important centres. Working together, these industrious and self-reliant settlers built churches, schools, and a strong and vibrant community life. American missionaries taught local black children at the Mount Hope and Mount Pleasant schools....”

Just as I was leaving the ceremony that day, a man who I didn't even know approached me to say that August 1 should be recognized as Emancipation Day in Ontario and that a bill should be introduced to make it so. While driving home, I couldn't stop thinking about what he had said. I decided to look into it further and asked legislative counsel to draft the legislation that was eventually passed into law with support from all three parties.

During this month, I would hope that all Ontarians will take a moment to learn about some of the many contributions that the black community has made to our province. They have played an integral role in so many ways in shaping Ontario into the province we know today, and have every good reason to be proud.

1540

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to respond to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on her bill to repeal the Public Works Protection Act and replace it with other legislation.

Her statement was a bit of a benign assessment of what actually was the genesis of this piece of legislation. The government had little or no choice, based on the fumbling and bumbling and the absolute mess that they made of policing the G20 here in 2010. Let's not forget that that was what caused them to have to bring in this piece of legislation.

You will recall that, at that time—and this was part of the Ombudsman's report. It was not an observation; it was a scathing indictment of the handling of the McGuinty government, and laid blame squarely at their feet for the mess of the G20. Let's not mince words here, Mr. Speaker. It was a disastrous operation on the part of the McGuinty government.

He made it clear that it was so wrapped in secrecy—in fact, this Legislature was still sitting, yet the government passed a regulation behind closed doors, giving the police the authority to use the previous act in order to police the G20. And this misinformation and also the way it was portrayed—in fact, the government went out of its way to ensure that the people had the understanding that the police had these massive new powers with which to police the G20. Therefore, as a result of that, hundreds of people were improperly detained and arrested.

So at this point we welcome the introduction of the legislation. We're certainly going to take a good look at it. I haven't had a chance to review the entire part; I did have a briefing on behalf of the minister today, and I appreciate that. But we will take a good look, and we'll

also make sure that stakeholders have an opportunity to comment on it.

But let's not forget why we're here today with the introduction of this piece of legislation. It was the abdication of the responsibility of this government in 2010. And let's remember that later that year—while the Premier would never do the right thing and actually fire a minister—by cover of darkness and recess, there was a cabinet shuffle that summer. The former minister responsible for passing that regulation was out and a new minister was put in place.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is with pride that New Democrats celebrate Black History Month in the province of Ontario.

It's important to pause and recognize the contributions, efforts and milestones made over 400 years of African-Canadian history, even before Confederation. It is also a time for each of us to reflect on the struggles that have also occurred over this period and to commit ourselves to creating better, greater and more equitable opportunities for every Ontarian.

I would like to tell you about a special connection between the riding of Trinity–Spadina and the efforts we celebrate today. Eight years before slavery was abolished in the British Empire, 12 slaves chose freedom over slavery and began their escape from the southern United States. Fearing recapture and return to slavery, they travelled at night and rested during the day, making their journey northward towards Upper Canada. In Toronto, they were denied membership in every church they approached.

These 12 fugitive slaves could have given up. Instead, they banded together and formed their own congregation under the leadership of Elder Washington Christian. Slowly, the congregation built a home for itself, moving from members' homes to schoolhouses and finally to a church building of its own. Almost 200 years later, the First Baptist Church at Huron and D'Arcy streets is an example of what can be accomplished when individuals strive toward a common purpose.

Today, we should all be working together to ensure equal opportunities for the descendants of that original congregation. We should strive for equal opportunity for every member of the African-Canadian diaspora and commit to exposing and abolishing racism and injustice wherever it exists.

We can see the results of racism and injustice around us: racialized poverty, incarceration, profiling. These feed upon each other to reduce the freedom and opportunities available to many members of our community.

With dedication, commitment and effort, we can reach true freedom, equality and opportunity.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The repeal and replacement of the Public Works Protection Act is a direct result of the

failed and misleading way that the McGuinty government handled security during the G20 summit. More than 1,100 people were—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like the member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Withdrawn.

Andrea Horwath introduced a bill that would have established an independent commission to perform a full public inquiry into the decisions and actions of the government and the police during the G20 summit. I think there are a lot of questions that still remain. The potential for abuse in the Public Works Protection Act was beyond troubling.

What made it worse was the fact that the McGuinty government—my apologies—passed secret regulations that severely curtailed civil liberties. It led to inconsistent and arbitrary enforcements of the act. How do you expect citizens to obey a regulation that they do not know was passed?

I look forward to seeing and examining amendments to an outdated law that are now being put before us. I would like to see that the broad definition of infrastructure is taken out completely. The powers under such legislation should not pre-emptively include all buildings; instead it should only protect the necessary structures, such as courthouses and nuclear and electrical facilities.

I mostly look forward to seeing the ability of the government to pass secret regulations eliminated. Changes should be required to be introduced through legislation that has to be discussed, and that will make people aware of their rights and obligations.

We need accountability mechanisms to provide for cases where citizens think their liberties have been violated. We need people to be told what their rights are and given a choice. I sure hope that these amendments will address the plethora of issues that the government's mishandling of the G20 security became the symbol of.

The amendments will not do much to change the injustices that were committed during the G20 summit on unsuspecting protestors, for which the government has not apologized. Hopefully it will prevent the trampling of civil liberties that happened during the G20 summit from happening ever again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand before you somewhat penitent. I made a mistake earlier; I missed motions before I went to ministers' statements. So, are there motions?

There being none, it is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have a petition calling on the province of Ontario to remove the snapping turtle from the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act hunted species list. I want to thank Robert Bowles, the founder

of an organization called Kids for Turtles in Orillia, for presenting this to me with 11,000 names.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act the snapping turtle can be taken with a valid sport or fishing licence by box or funnel trap or by bare hands. Daily limit is two, possession limit is five;

“Whereas the governments of Ontario and Canada and endangered species review boards agree that, due to development of their natural habitat, low reproduction rate, vehicular traffic, human persecution and legal hunting, snapping turtles are at risk of disappearing from Ontario, and therefore have listed snapping turtles as a species of special concern;

“Whereas seven of eight of Ontario’s native turtle species are listed provincially and nationally as species at risk;

“Whereas hunting of seven of these species has been completely banned in Ontario, including the not-at-risk painted turtle. Astonishingly, it is still legal to hunt the snapping turtle, one of the at-risk turtle species;

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has no data to back up its claims that a hunt of small numbers is sustainable and that snapping turtles are widespread and locally abundant (a contradiction to the findings of the Ontario and national species at risk review boards);

“Whereas no Ontario region or hunting zone population figures exist;

“Whereas no special licence exists that would enable the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to record the number of snapping turtles taken each hunting season in each region/zone;

“Whereas after three years of public outcry and political discussion the snapping turtle remains a hunted species in Ontario;

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

“That the snapping turtle, an Ontario and national listed species at risk, be removed from the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act hunted species list.”

I’m pleased to present that to Jason for Jason to present it to the table.

1550

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: I have quite a stack of petitions here from Algoma–Manitoulin that I’d like to read in.

“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 from Algoma–Manitoulin and will be signing it and sending it to the table with Kriti.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

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

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition here from Zero Carbon Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas global climate change is the most serious threat facing humanity and poses significant risks to our environment, economy, society and human health; and

“More than 97% of scientists working in the disciplines contributing to studies of our climate and all national science academies accept that climate change is almost certainly being caused by human activities mainly due to the use of fossil fuels; and

“The objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is ‘stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system’; and

“Climate scientists are now warning us that limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees centigrade is essential; and

“Ontario has a clear responsibility to reduce our emissions given that our per capita greenhouse gas emissions are among the highest in the world; and

“With the introduction of the Green Energy Act and feed-in tariff program, Ontario is an example to the rest of the world of the principle of renewable energy development; and

“The best research today indicates that energy demands are decreasing and that sufficient potential energy from a diverse supply of renewable sources exists to meet Ontario’s current and projected energy demands;

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

“Immediately prepare a plan that requires that 100% of Ontario’s stationary energy be from zero-carbon sources before the end of 2023, with a timeline to be audited annually by the Auditor General and published reports.”

I send this petition up with Katelyn.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition, signed by a great many of the good citizens of Oxford county, that was presented to me by Lisa Donaldson from Tavistock, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tavistock’s Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

“Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

“Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

“Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

“We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario’s 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds.”

I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker, as I agree with this petition.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and” indeed “a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools” necessary “to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries” and other locations; and

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the” government of Ontario “take all necessary actions to protect our” wetland and “water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at 4148 Regional Highway 2, Newcastle, and Lakeridge Road in Durham,” as was mentioned yesterday in the media coverage.

I’m pleased to present this and support it. I present it to Ruby to bring to the table, and I’ll sign it as well.

LYME DISEASE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; 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 at 45% to 95% of the time;

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

I hereby sign my signature.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from a wonderful individual, Diane Guyette, who lives in Keene, Ontario—Keene? The member from Durham, I think, has roots in Keene, so he may know the Guyette family.

A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

“Whereas real progress has been made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

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

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition I want to share with you from one of my constituents, who also has a residence in the Muskoka Lakes area. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

1600

“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.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition on my constituent's behalf.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: This petition comes from Prince Edward county.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed Gilead Power project in Prince Edward county is currently planned for an area that the municipality has designated for another purpose; and

“Whereas it's the opinion of real estate experts in Prince Edward county that the installation of the Gilead industrial wind factory will negatively impact property

values and the tourism sector, which is vital to the economic success of Prince Edward county; and

“Whereas other jurisdictions have recognized that it is environmentally counterproductive to put industrial wind factories in important bird areas, such as the one that exists on the south shore of Prince Edward county; and

“Whereas that recognition was also accepted by the Senate of Canada through a unanimous resolution;

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

“That the public consultation period for the EBR project number 011-5239, also known as the Gilead project, be extended to April 1 to allow the community sufficient time to make clear their arguments as to the negative impact that the project will have on the people, economy and ecology of Prince Edward county.”

I agree with this petition and will be signing it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to get two in in one day. It reads as follows:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at 4148 Regional Highway 2, Newcastle, and Lakeridge Road in Durham.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debated adjourned on February 21, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

This Liberal bill will do little to help seniors in my riding of Perth–Wellington. Most seniors cannot afford to spend \$10,000 in order to receive a \$1,500 tax credit.

Because of the Liberals' tax-and-spend ways our province is in an economic crisis.

Seniors do not have the means to afford costly renovations when they are coping with rising costs for the heating of their home and when they are saddled with the HST on those home-heating costs.

Here's a far better plan: giving seniors, and indeed all Ontarians, 8% of the cost of home heating to put back in their pockets.

As my colleague Peter Shurman, the PC caucus critic for finance, has stated, the percentage of seniors who will benefit from this tax credit is incredibly small, Mr. Speaker. This bill would help only a very tiny group. It benefits those who can already afford renovations and it does nothing to help those seniors who cannot afford to renovate their homes.

I know first-hand why seniors want to renovate their homes. My wife, Jane, and I are small business owners with our own painting company.

Mr. Speaker, the McGuinty government could do so much more by helping all families in this province: They could help business to create jobs; they could cut red tape that causes our province to lose jobs; they could reduce the size and cost of government; and they could ensure accountability and value for money for taxpayers.

As I stated, Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 only benefits a small number of seniors, and it does little to improve accessibility for seniors. Seniors, be they in communities such as Mitchell, St. Marys, Stratford, Arthur, Drayton, Palmerston or the many other communities in my riding, are not in a position to spend \$10,000 so that they can get \$1,500 back. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that the proposed healthy homes renovation tax would cost the provincial treasury \$60 million in 2011-12?

Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus have been telling the Liberal government for eight and a half years that their reckless, out-of-control spending cannot continue. Mr. Drummond confirmed this when he issued his report last week. He brought forward 362 recommendations to help our province recover from Liberal mismanagement, and 105 of them are in the health care section alone.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is standing at the brink of an economic disaster. The job of government is to create the right economic conditions so that businesses thrive and, in turn, create good-paying jobs. We need to do more

than to give a tax credit to a small number of seniors when Ontario has lost thousands and thousands of full-time private sector jobs. Our Ontario PC caucus has stepped up to the plate with a job creation task force whose mandate is to bring forward new jobs, ideas and job creation.

Our province was once the economic engine that drove Canada; now we are at the back of the pack. We have a deficit of \$16 billion—\$16 billion. We're borrowing about \$1.8 million every hour, every day. With each passing hour, we're digging the hole deeper. Ontario's jobless rate is higher than the national average; in fact, our jobless rate has been higher than the rest of Canada for many, many months. This means that in far too many cases, people who are supporting their aging parents or supplementing their parents' or grandparents' retirement incomes may well be out of a job. At a time like this, a responsible government would be considering measures that would target our job crisis. They would be proposing bills for consideration in this House that are innovative and carefully thought out, bills based on sound economics, not on questionable politics.

Just how much of an impact would Bill 2 have on Ontario families and seniors? I am told, Mr. Speaker, that about 13% of Ontario's population—that is, 1.8 million people—are over the age of 65 and meet the age requirements of Bill 2. The median income for seniors in Ontario, meaning that the largest number of seniors fall into this income category, is \$25,000 a year for a single person or \$45,000 for a couple. To be eligible for the \$1,500 maximum-end tax credit under Bill 2, a senior has to spend \$10,000 on home renovations. Quite simply, the math does not add up. Seniors cannot afford it.

Today, our seniors have much lower returns from their investments than they have had in the past. Interest rates have fallen. The nest egg that provides the senior's cash flow is dwindling. Plain and simple, many seniors cannot afford costly home renovations. And they're concerned not only for their future but also for their children's future and their grandchildren's future. They know that, thanks to the McGuinty government, it will be a future of debt stretching as far as the eye can see.

The Liberals have the option to help more Ontario seniors by bringing in a real economic action plan, including debt relief and broad-based tax relief. I urge them to do that, and I urge them to do that soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to comment on some of the comments from my colleague from Perth–Wellington. We agree with a lot of his comments. Many seniors can't afford to renovate their houses, and the percentage of seniors that can afford to do it is very small. But one thing where we disagree a little bit—we all know this—the longer we keep seniors in their homes, it's actually better for them, but it's also cheaper for the economy. So if this bill does proceed to committee, it's our hope that

we can do as much as we can to make sure that as many seniors as possible can qualify for this.

One thing I'd like to bring up again is a topic that was brought by my honourable colleague Gilles Bisson—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Timmins–James Bay; pardon me. He brought up a case about a lady who couldn't go down the stairs, because of arthritis, to get to her washer and dryer. If there was money to bring the washer and dryer upstairs, that would keep her in her home longer. It's a good idea.

I think there are lots of ideas like that, and we should take a broader approach and see what we can do to actually keep seniors in their homes. We are afraid that such a narrow approach is going to be taken that things that should qualify, won't. We're hoping that if this bill makes it to committee, that we sit down and make it as broad as possible so it's actually going to do what it was intended to do.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Let me say that I was listening intently to the new member from Perth–Wellington, and he highlighted a number of things that I think are important with discussion of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit, from our colleague the Minister of Finance, Mr. Duncan—interesting, Speaker.

Certainly, during the recess, when we left here in early December until coming back just yesterday, I had the opportunity to visit with many seniors in Peterborough riding, and many of them were talking about making renovations to their homes, particularly those individuals who have seen their mobility decline over a period of time. They want to go to the local Home Hardware in Peterborough or Home Depot or Rona—which is Canadian-owned. I do encourage people to go to Rona, because it is Canadian-owned. They're looking at those new bathtubs that are designed with the door to go in and out. That will allow seniors who have mobility issues—if they have arthritis and their mobility has declined—an opportunity to stay at home, to utilize those newly designed bathtubs and showers. Many of them can take advantage of discounts that are in place right now through Home Depot, Rona and other home organizations that specialize in this type of equipment. So there's the opportunity to take advantage of this, going back to October 1, 2011. I encourage people to keep their receipts, put them away in a little file, to make sure that they fill them out and take advantage of this very popular healthy homes renovation tax credit that our government introduced.

Look, I'm talking to the people of Peterborough riding, through you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind them to get out, go to Home Hardware, go to Home Depot, go to Rona, get this new equipment, put it in your homes, keep tradespeople working and take advantage of this home renovation tax credit.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is truly is a great program in so many different ways. I know we've heard some comments on the other side that it doesn't help certain seniors, and that may very well be true. It may not be helping everybody out there, but it will be helping those seniors who have wanted to do something in their home to make it more energy-efficient, to allow them to stay in their own homes a little bit longer.

Speaker, survey after survey clearly shows that if you give people a choice as to whether or not they should go into a retirement home or into a long-term-care home, they prefer to stay in their own homes.

Interjection: Absolutely.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Absolutely. Everybody prefers to stay in their own home, provided they've got the support mechanism. That's why the CCACs around this province are doing such good work. They should be doing more, and certainly we hope to increase home care so people can stay in their own homes longer.

It's very interesting, Speaker: When you look at the admission rate to long-term-care homes, when I first got started in this business a long time ago, probably in the stone age or whatever, the average age of a person going into a long-term-care home was around 70 or 71. Currently, it's much closer to 90. That basically means that people want to stay in their own home, provided that they've got the amenities there that will allow them to do that.

Certainly, this kind of a grant I realize perhaps not everybody can take advantage of, but those people who will be able to take advantage of that to get their renovations done, to get the necessary tax credits—it's something that they will benefit from. As has already been mentioned, there are many other organizations that will benefit from it as well. For example, there will be more supplies bought at the various repair shops. There will be more service individuals and handymen and carpenters and electricians involved. It keeps everybody working, so this is a good program.

I know, Speaker, that everybody in the House, at the end of the day, will vote for this program.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, sir?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could we keep it down, please?

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My concern is this, and I respect the fact that the member opposite, the Attorney General, has also highlighted this issue: There are many people who may not be able to take advantage of this plan; there are many people who don't have the resources to invest in their home.

If there is a shortfall or if there's a case where there is money left over, what type of assurances can we have that this money is used to benefit Ontarians? I'd like to see some sort of guarantee that this money is used to assist seniors in other ways, like home care, seniors' care; that it's used to assist people who are struggling to make their ends meet; that it's to assist people who can't pay their bills, people who are struggling to afford their medical bills, their drugs, their prescriptions. That's something that's of great importance to me. It's of great importance to the people of Ontario that the funds that are allocated for this plan are used in a way that truly helps Ontarians; that truly helps seniors, not just the seniors who can afford to spend thousands of dollars on home improvement; that it assists those seniors who don't have the means to do so; that it assists those who are hardest off and those people whom we have the obligation to assist the most: those who are most vulnerable in our society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Response, please. No response? No response.

Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I rise today in response to Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act.

This being my first opportunity to speak in the House at length, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the voters of Kenora–Rainy River for their support. I wanted to start off by saying that a few years ago, I would never have dreamed that I would be standing here today giving my inaugural speech, because it has always been my preference to get involved behind the scenes, to always work to improve the lives of people living in my community and my region, but this is something that, like I said, I really had no aspirations for.

Fortunately I had a good mentor, and I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank my predecessor, Mr. Howard Hampton, for the work that he has done in my riding and for northern Ontario as a whole—and actually for all of Ontario, for his time as leader. Mr. Hampton was a fierce champion of our northern identity. It was he who encouraged me to turn my passion for my community and my region into an opportunity to effect change on a larger scale and bring that here to Queen's Park.

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I'm not sure if Mr. Hampton knows it, but in many ways he's the reason why I'm here. It's not necessarily that he encouraged me to run or that he provided me with an opportunity to get my feet wet by working in his constituency office, but by shaping my politics.

Growing up, I used to sit around the table with my grandparents in Atikokan, and they liked to share stories with me and discuss the news. These stories shaped who I am today, and many of them were centred on my grandmother's experiences growing up in Miscampbell, which is a township just outside of Fort Frances. To this day, I recall her memories of her neighbours the Hamptons, who owned the general store down the road. For her, it was the simple things that made the difference

while she grew up during the Great Depression, like including candy at no charge in her family's grocery orders. At that time her family, like so many Canadians, had a difficult time making ends meet, and the candy was treated as gold and really savoured among her siblings. Her stories taught me that simple acts of kindness can improve the lives of others in ways that we may not fully appreciate, and that these acts of kindness are the basis for community.

Life in the north has always involved hard work, dedication and a will to triumph over adversity. We in the north are a resilient people, but we also are people who value community. We help our neighbours and we step up to meet challenges as a community. Those stories taught me that by working together we can meet any challenge, that leadership is not the act of telling someone what to do, but inspiring others to work together for positive change. Howard Hampton was a leader in that sense. He inspired others to work together and build a strong and proud northern Ontario. He may not know it, but when my grandparents spoke fondly of their neighbours the Hamptons, they spoke extra fondly of their son Howard, who had helped them over the years with WSIB cases and other things. It is an honour and privilege to have the opportunity to build on his great legacy in the north and here in Queen's Park.

I spoke about my grandparents, and I think it's fitting that I spoke about them in response to a bill where its proponents say that it's been developed to help seniors. Both of my grandmothers still live in Atikokan, and while the population is aging across the province, communities in the north are aging at a faster rate. It's not so much that there was a large boom in the north where we had a lot more children 60 or 70 years ago; it's more that young people are leaving our communities. As little as five or six years ago, students would graduate high school, head off to university and come back for the summers, and then they'd find a job in the community where they grew up. Twenty years ago, it was not uncommon for similar students to graduate high school, walk down the road and get a job at a local paper or sawmill. Neither of those things is happening today. People are still graduating high school, but that's the last we see of them. They don't come back for the summers anymore because there aren't summer jobs to be had. They don't walk down the road to the mill to get a job anymore because there aren't jobs there either—if the mill even exists, which in many cases they don't.

We in the north have an aging population, it's true; and we are aging exponentially faster because of the youth who are leaving our communities. But our story is much different than the one that the government is trying to portray through this bill. You see, Speaker, in order for people to benefit from this program, they need to have the money up front. If they've got the money, that's great; then they can renovate their homes, they can make them more accessible and then, come tax time, they can receive their rebate in the mail.

The problem is that many seniors and many northerners do not have the money. When the forest industry

vanished, so did a lot of seniors' pensions. Just a couple of weeks ago, I met with a large group of mill retirees in Fort Frances. None of those seniors would be able to afford to take advantage of this credit. They spent decades working hard, paying taxes and building a life for themselves and their families, and the money they thought was going to be there when they retired is gone, vanished into thin air because the pensions were never properly funded. The promises that were made to them when they bargained in good faith many years ago have gone into thin air because the plans that were in place assumed a thriving forest industry, and that simply is not the case anymore.

Speaker, when you say "pension" in the north, you're not actually saying "pension"; you're saying "reduced pension." People who thought that they would be able to retire in comfort are retiring in poverty because at least 18% of the income that is supposed to be in the pension fund simply isn't, and many seniors are left unable to take advantage of this credit. Even worse, seniors cannot afford to pay their bills. That's why a couple of years ago, dozens of seniors and non-seniors came out on a windy and snowy November day, when temperatures hovered around minus 40—and I think that minus 40 is probably a temperature that many people in this room right now cannot fully appreciate. They can't comprehend it.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's cold.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's very, very cold. Dozens of seniors huddled together to ask one thing, and that thing was not a tax rebate for their homes. They were asking for lower hydro bills. Rather than being inside and comfortable, these seniors were so fed up that they braved winter weather—weather that even the most hardy of us shudder to think about—because they can't afford to heat their homes, let alone talk about renovating them.

So let me tell you something. There is nothing more heartbreaking than sitting in a room with somebody who has worked hard their entire life, paid their dues, and who is in tears and facing complete and total desperation because they can't pay a bill that's deemed to be an essential service. You don't know what it's like to hear a senior who has had their pension reduced, whose home is in need of repair, who can barely feed themselves and they can't afford to pay their hydro bill, and for you to have to tell them that there's nothing that can be done to help.

They don't want to be told that if they pay a few thousand dollars upfront, they may get a couple of hundred dollars eight months from now. They don't want to hear that one of the few couples who still have a decent pension and can afford to do it are renovating their home while they are left heating their homes with space heaters because the furnace died and there aren't any funds to help them purchase a new one.

But it appears that these people don't matter to this government. It appears that they don't factor into the equation. It seems that this program, which should help people in need—it doesn't. It seems that as long as the

government can make it look like they're doing something, it doesn't matter if anything is actually trickling down and helping people in need.

To put it bluntly, this bill doesn't help those who need it. Taking the HST off home heating would help a bit. Taking the HST off hydro would help as well. Or, dare I even suggest it, the novel idea of charging people in my region the cost of producing hydro would be a start. In my region, we produce some of the cleanest and cheapest electricity in the world but we're not paying those prices. We have our own grid, we have our own infrastructure, but instead we're lumped into a pricing formula that makes no logical sense at all.

Why are people in Ear Falls, who could literally run an extension cord into the source of their electricity, paying \$100 a month for the delivery of their hydro? It does not make sense. I suppose it makes sense to someone, and most likely that person is probably sitting at a desk in southern Ontario. But are they asking themselves: "Does this make sense? Does it accomplish any of our goals?"

There are people in Red Lake living off social assistance, living in subsidized housing, who pay less than \$100 per month for rent because they can't afford it, but their hydro bills are \$800. How does this make sense?

Are people in the north upset? Yes, I would say that they are. I think that they have every right to be upset. We have a government that believes that a one-size-fits-all scheme works for the entire province of Ontario, and it doesn't.

I wish I could stand here today and say some nice pleasantries about how this is my first speech and how everything is great, especially in northern Ontario, but I can't, because the truth is, things are not okay. We in northern Ontario want to be heard, and it's time that this government and its ministries started to listen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I think it's quite fitting to welcome Ms. Campbell, the member from Kenora–Rainy River. It's also very notable to know that she had no intention of running for election and getting elected. She wanted to serve the people in her community. But, of course, the better side took over and she's here today and I think the people of Kenora–Rainy River—

Applause.

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Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes. And as she said, she comes from a good school. Mr. Hampton was an outstanding member, not only in the House but as the member serving the people of Kenora–Rainy River. And I'm sure that Ms. Campbell, the member from Kenora–Rainy River today will do extremely well. Every member comes to this House with all the best wishes of doing the very best for their community, and no doubt she will be doing that. And as someone who was part of both sides of the House, the main thing is to speak on behalf of the people that send us to this particular place to serve them.

With respect to the bill, I have to say to the member that there's no difference between the seniors in Kenora–Rainy River or in York West or any other area. Seniors in need are seniors in need, and I think they should make available to them everything possible to make their life as comfortable in their own home as long as they can. Of course, everything this government and others—present, past, future—don't do things to affect every single person. They may be seniors that will benefit in some other areas. These particular seniors with this particular bill I'm sure will find good things to come to them if they can avail. Again, I would like to welcome the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to congratulate the member on a tremendous first maiden speech in this chamber—very well done. I'm very pleased to see you. You're a nice young woman from the north. You fought to get here. Now, my first maiden speech—of course, I yell a lot more than you do; you're a bit more calm. The person I remember responding to me was Peter Kormos, the former member from Welland, who of course was as colourful as I guess I can be from time to time. He gave me great advice: “Never lose sight of why you are here.”

I too followed in the footsteps of a great titan who was very well known in my riding, John Baird, as you did with Howard Hampton. Let me say this: In another year or two, that will be your riding, Ms. Campbell; it won't be Howard Hampton's. So keep up the good work, congratulations and I know that everybody at home who is watching you is very proud of you today.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I also would like to congratulate my seatmate, the member from Kenora–Rainy River and would like to comment on the members for York West and Nepean–Carleton. As a fellow northerner—and I've been to Dryden, I've been to Atitokan, I've been to the Fort—I have a little bit of understanding of the places she represents. One thing that's incredible about that riding is that she has 30-some communities or more that are fly-in. Being from northern Ontario, even I can't comprehend that. At least I can drive everywhere. So that is an incredible riding. To be able to represent that riding, to be able to get elected in that riding is a feat in itself. I do come after a member who was in for a long time. He wasn't from our party—

Hon. John Gerretsen: He was at one time.

Mr. John Vanthof: I stepped into that. But it's not easy, regardless what party they're from, it's not easy stepping into a riding that had been well represented by somebody for a long time. It's really hard, because they're used to the way the other person did things, and no matter how you do it, there are going to be questions. But I know the new member is up to it. Once again, I'm very proud to be sitting next to her and to share the same party affiliation. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further comments? Questions or comments? If not, the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'd like to thank the members for their support and words of encouragement; I appreciate that.

I spent a fair bit of time talking about my riding and how things are difficult for the seniors who live in Kenora–Rainy River and across the north. But what I think also needs to be said—I agree that seniors everywhere are facing the same challenges. I'd venture to say that in addition to being concerned about the seniors in my riding and the seniors in everybody's riding, what we need to do is to step things up. I think we need to stop playing politics and we need to start genuinely helping Ontarians. I'm under no illusion that we can maybe come up with a program that would help each and every single person, but I think the system is so broken right now that there are too many people falling through the cracks. The cracks are sometimes, it seems, like a mile wide. So that's why I'm here: to help improve things for seniors, not just in my riding, not just seniors, but to improve the lives of all Ontarians.

I'm very grateful to be here and again I want to thank the constituents of Kenora–Rainy River for allowing me to be here, and I look forward to working with everyone on all sides of the House and all parties in the best interests of Ontarians.

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

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Two days, and you can't fill the time yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would appreciate it if the member from Durham would try to be a little more kosher, and the other members don't rile up the member.

The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills may continue—he's a member of your party.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I speak in opposition to this act. I think it's a bad idea, and I think we cannot afford it.

It's an act to help seniors supposedly renovate their homes to improve mobility, accessibility and functionality in their homes up to \$10,000 of expense, and 15% of that expense could be a refund to the homeowner who fixes their home. The problem with that is only the people that have the cash, the \$10,000, can access the refund, so really it's a program to help wealthy people or people that have money or even a house. It does nothing for those people who are poor and don't have the cash to do the renovations. It's estimated to cost as much as \$135 million, and we can't afford \$135 million; a fellow named Mr. Drummond has outlined that for us this week.

I'd like to tell you a couple of stories of people in my riding who are examples of people that cannot take advantage of that program because they do not have the money. They're not wealthy; in fact, they're poor.

Joyce Nightingale is a lady in my riding who is 75 years old. She is one of the bravest, strongest, most principled people I've ever met. Unfortunately, life has not been kind to her. She is not prosperous. Her marriage failed, and her husband didn't treat her very well as the marriage was failing. She has a cottage, but she does not have a house. She does not have money; she has trouble even paying utility bills. One of her best friends who has fared better and does have a house and the means to live better has invited Joyce to live with her at her home through the winter months, and so Joyce does that.

This is truly an example of neighbours helping neighbours and community looking after those in need, and I think it's an example of what has to be done more in Ontario, because government increasingly is going to be unable to help people. We have flawed programs that do not deliver help where it's needed, and actually the money is wasted. That money would be better spent on lowering debt. Joyce's neighbours help her, and it worked successfully and actually builds a wonderful community spirit.

Another fellow in my riding named Larry Torrington, who was in dire straits recently, was helped by the Ontario Landowners Association. Last March, poor Larry—he has diabetes—had a leg amputated below the knee. He was in the hospital all summer recovering, recuperating from the loss of his leg.

On Labour Day he was told by the doctor that he was well enough to go home to his house, where he lives with his wife. But he was in a wheelchair, because he's now handicapped, and he didn't have the money, which was \$5,000, to build a ramp to go into his house.

The March of Dimes is an organization that comes up with money to help people like that occasionally. Unfortunately, they didn't have any money to help Larry. So he ended up staying in the hospital all fall until a week before Christmas, which was \$850 a day. It came to about \$90,000 that was spent by the provincial government on health care that he didn't need, plus that bed wasn't available to a truly sick person and he was going to be staying there for another few months until the March of Dimes or some group had the money to build a ramp for him. So the Ontario Landowners Association was called by a reporter who said, "What do you think of that?"

Anyway, this group of people—I co-operated and helped a little bit because we heard about the story—built the ramp for Larry. We said that rather than blame government for doing a bad thing—it was just before Christmas—it was time to do something nice for a neighbour who was in need. It was an obvious need, and it was a small need, so we volunteered labour. We went to Home Depot and said, "Could you help us with some materials?" They gave us the materials at 80% off cost, so they were really good citizens, great for the community. Over the weekend, seven of us built the ramp. We were all over 60 years old, and we were all very proud of that; the fact that we lived this long is one point. So we haven't been a burden on health care yet. But we

got a great sense of community feeling out of building this ramp for Larry. We got him home three days before Christmas. We sang Christmas carols and had a few speeches from the new deck. It was a wonderful experience, and everybody felt very rewarded, and Larry got home for Christmas with his family. The cost was \$400.

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We used it as a bit of a fundraiser to help other people like Larry get out of the hospital. That's another example of how we can help people in our community without government, and it actually makes our community stronger because we build a sense of community spirit, and that's the way it's got to be done. Too often, as government, we try to do too much, and I don't think we're suited to do all things properly—certainly not cheaply, certainly not efficiently, and sometimes we miss the goal completely.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well said, Jack.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you.

Another bill where I think money is being wasted and could be better spent is Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. It's the eastern Ontario economic development fund and the southwestern economic development fund. Being from eastern Ontario, it would be very easy for me to say, "Oh, great, we get some money to give away to businesses to create jobs." In fact, most of the time what happens with that is the businesses that are going to add on an addition to their factory or their office or whatever it might be are going to do it anyways, because they're making money, because they're good managers and they have a successful business plan. But if they can get money out of government, it would be good business to take that money. It's a bad plan, so I'm opposed to that, and we can't afford that amount of money. It's some tens of millions—I don't know exactly, but that should, again, be put back towards paying down debt.

The Drummond report identified for us that we have a huge deficit and huge debt. We've been hearing an awful lot about that over the last week. It's going to be \$411 billion—if we don't do anything, it will hit that level in five years—and \$30 billion of deficit. We are hitting the wall financially, and something has got to be done. So far, we just don't see the people across the hall biting into that bullet and agreeing that, "Yes, we're going to do that." I'm hoping they change their minds, and with the budget, they come out and do the right thing. These programs have to be killed because we can't afford it, and they're not delivering the goods.

One of the problems is our demographics are changing in Ontario. We're getting older. The baby boomers are getting older. Pretty soon they're going to need health care, and then our children are going to be the taxpayers, and there's fewer of them. So there's going to be more sick people and fewer taxpayers, and that's just not going to work, folks. So we have to do something, and we have to do something quickly, and it has to be significant, because we're starting out in a hole as we head into a

dark time as far as income and expenses go, and there has got to be some serious rationalization going on here to fix these problems.

The Drummond report is just telling us what we already know, that we are in trouble. It doesn't go far enough. We've got to do things like wage freezes for public servants. We've got to kill the Green Energy Act, because we cannot afford that. We've got to sell the Liquor Control Board, because it's time to do that, and the government shouldn't be in the business anyway. That would give us, I'm told, \$10 billion of cash, which would be one year's interest on the debt.

We've got to create jobs. We should be killing the College of Trades legislation. We should be reducing the construction journeyman-apprenticeship ratio of 3 to 1 down to 1 to 1. We estimate, as PCs, that that would create 200,000 jobs. We've got to create wealth—taxes. That will help solve our problems.

We need to get rid of red tape. It will free companies up to do the business of doing business and creating jobs and creating wealth. We need to make people free to be innovative and creative.

We need to reduce the size and cost of government, and we just can't afford big government anymore. And we can't afford any more scandals: no more eHealth, no more Ornge. That just sucks the money, adds to our debt, adds to our deficit.

Hydro costs are too high. People can't afford them. We heard in the north that's one of our big problems; that's a problem everywhere. I live in the Ottawa area, and if I look across the river, I see Hydro Quebec over there. We can get five-cent hydro, and why we're not getting it, I don't know. We run hydro lines right through eastern Ontario and sell it to New York and the New England states cheap. Cornwall is buying it right now and has since 1920. So all we have to do is get our city of Ottawa to do that, and we'd be all set. That's my good friend Jim Watson, and I'm sure he'll return my call.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Give Jim a call.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I will. He owes me breakfast. We'll have a good time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'll call him right away. We'll get you breakfast.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order, please.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you.

So we need cheaper electricity because people just can't afford these high electricity rates. We can't afford the \$135 million we're spending for this piece of legislation that would be better put towards things like home care and long-term care.

Where else are we here? We need to stop this 30% tuition grant as well. That's money we can't afford to spend. We can't be buying things we can't afford.

Other areas of health care that need to be addressed are autism, teenage mental illness—I ran into these during campaigning, and people have called my office. We hear some very sad stories. We've had teenage mental illness here in this chamber, with Allan Hubley

before Christmas, so we know first-hand what a terrible thing that is for families. I've run into families with autistic children, and there's precious little help from government for them. So there's a lot of people who need to be helped by us, and they've been neglected so far because they're not pretty or attractive types of diseases.

Bill 2 has to be stopped. We can't afford it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments? The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the member for his maiden speech, as well as the member before that from Kenora–Rainy River.

It's kind of interesting in this House, but you learn after a while—and it's kind of unfortunate. Everybody, when you first come here, wants to make changes to the system. We all have great energy to do that. The problem is that anything that's proposed from this side has to be opposed over there, and vice versa. I'm telling you, Speaker, in the long run that isn't the way it should work.

You may have some good ideas. We have some good ideas. We can support one another in these ideas. Certainly a program like this that helps senior citizens do the necessary renovations in their homes—it's not going to help everybody; I realize that—to make it more energy efficient, to make it more user-friendly is a good program, and nobody can argue about that. We're not talking about rich people here. We're talking about people who have \$10,000 that they could spend on upgrading their home rather than moving into an apartment, a senior citizens' home or whatever.

Let me just get back to the member from Kenora–Rainy River and her maiden speech. It was an excellent speech. She speaks very passionately about her community. What I really liked about what she had to say is that she has been a constituency assistant, and I think in this House we have to recognize all of the main work that's being done in our offices on a day-to-day basis, and that the people who try to make us look as good as possible are our constituency assistants. Any assistant I've had over the years—and I've had a few of them, although most of them have stayed with me over the years—are always surprised at the magnitude and differences in questions and concerns that are brought to them on a day-to-day basis.

I just want to congratulate both members on their maiden speeches. I would suggest to them, don't always necessarily assume that because it comes from the government, it's bad, or that your ideas are good. There's good and bad on all sides. This is a good program, so vote for it.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to respond.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will sit down for a second. Questions and comments? No more questions and comments?

You have a two-minute response, member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll learn the rules pretty soon.

I'd just like to respond to the member from Kingston and the Islands. This wasn't my maiden speech, but thank you for the comment. That's tomorrow morning. If you'd like to come tomorrow morning, I'll buy you breakfast and we'll talk about it.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Only if Jim comes along.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Okay.

I'm not opposed to the bill just because it's Liberal. I'm opposed to the bill because we can't afford it and it doesn't help the people it should.

I'll end at that point. I will look forward to chatting with you further some day.

Interjection: Further debate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Thank you, House leader.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the healthy homes renovation tax credit because, quite frankly, I'm concerned about this bill.

Bill 2 comes at a time when we in Huron–Bruce and throughout the province are faced with a very serious spending crisis, and we simply cannot afford to direct money in this manner when we have unprecedented challenges in our health care system that require long-term vision to come up with affordable solutions.

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Just last week, Mr. Drummond warned in his report that Liberal spending needs to be reined in immediately, yet here we are still talking about spending more money. The healthy home credit will cost \$60 million in its first six months of implementation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have a couple of sidebars, and your own member is trying to give a speech. So maybe we could take the sidebars outside the Legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: They could be outside bars.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's right. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, this program fails to take into account the big picture. At a time when the province is facing a \$16-billion deficit, we can't fix all problems by throwing money at them.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Oh, I could talk about that. We're growing another 24% without any government assistance.

When we look specifically at health care costs, we see that they are rising at unsustainable rates. Health is the biggest item in the government's budget, accounting for 40.3% of total program spending. The government spent \$44.8 billion on health care in 2010-11. Mr. Drummond calls this an ever more costly trajectory, and he predicts that health care costs will reach \$62.5 billion by 2017-18 if we don't stop this madness. His report calls for health spending to be reined in to an annual increase of 2.5%. This is in stark contrast to our current rate of increase at

4.9%, which promises to bankrupt our province if we continue on this path.

In this context, when I'm speaking to the good folks of Huron–Bruce or across the province, goat farmers etc., it's hard to justify this price tag for this healthy home tax credit, when there's nothing healthy about it at all. It will cost the government \$135 million per year to cover this credit. Moreover, the details on this program haven't been provided, so we don't even know the source of funds other than that these funds will be moving from other program areas, probably where we need it most.

The government needs to ask itself, "Will this credit benefit our province at a time when we are facing serious budgetary crises—ballooning health costs, out of control energy costs and a job crisis?" But unfortunately, the answer I believe we're going to get, Mr. Speaker, from the government is no, they will not. They need to ask our government, why not help all Ontario families by implementing an all-encompassing benefit? For example, if the government has \$135 million to spend, then why not remove the HST from electricity or heating bills to give all taxpayers some relief from their rising energy bills under that costly green energy plan? If you will recall, in my maiden speech I noted that my 96-year-old grandmother lives on her own near McIntosh in Huron county. She again, as we were visiting with our leader, Tim Hudak, just a couple of weeks ago, expressed the need to have relief from her ever-rising energy costs.

Again, will our government listen? I'm afraid not if they continue with this particular credit. This credit does nothing—does very little for Ontario's budgetary crisis, as I've mentioned, and it does little in terms of immediate relief from escalating energy bills for the aging population.

In fact, the Liberal Aging at Home strategy has been a dismal failure, costing an estimated \$1 billion. In December 2010, the Auditor General found that 10,000 people are still waiting for home care. That is why we need long-term affordable, viable plans.

Mr. Drummond says that a vital first step in health care is a long-term view. In his report, he calls on the government to develop a 20-year plan—a "plan that will, though it involves tough decisions in the short term, deliver a superior health care system down the road." What we don't need is window dressing, and that's what this healthy homes tax credit really is. It's window dressing. It's a short-term tax credit for a small pocket of seniors and their children, and that is a short-term approach that we cannot afford.

We can add the healthy homes tax credit to a long list of Liberal tax benefits that pick and choose winners and losers. For example, they promised to cut tuition fees for college and university students by 30% in their last election campaign. As it turns out, only one in three students is benefiting from this program once you read the restrictions and the fine print.

This healthy homes tax credit is not a solution to the economic problems that everyday Ontarians are facing, nor will it help our seniors who are facing health challenges as they age. Like the tuition credit, it applies

only to a tiny segment of their population. Wealthier seniors will renovate regardless. Poor seniors will not be able to afford to spend \$10,000 to cash in on this proposed tax credit. Therefore, it does not make sense.

This selective approach is not sustainable in the long term. The number of seniors is expected to double over the next decade. If the government is serious about helping seniors, the healthy homes tax credit is not the way forward.

So I'm asking: Why could the government not afford addressing real help for seniors? For example, they should be easing wait times for long-term-care spaces. Right now, it's my understanding that seniors are forced to wait up to 173 days. In the riding of Huron-Bruce, we're told, long-term beds are not an option at this time, and it's a terrific need that we need to be addressing. It's shameful that the government does not have the foresight to look long term.

The Drummond report dedicated 105 recommendations to health care. Did it recommend a healthy homes credit for seniors? No, it did not. It called for an across-the-board review of health care. We need a long-term, integrated, sustainable health care plan.

This proposed healthy homes credit is a one-off measure that adds to our broken health care system. Mr. Drummond calls this health care system "a series of disjointed services in many silos." Mr. Drummond says we are not getting value for money, relative to other jurisdictions. We have fewer physicians per capita than continental European countries, and compensation for hospitals and physicians should be tied to patient outcomes. In this economic context, with a debt-ridden province, we need to re-evaluate how we are spending our money in health care.

The healthy homes tax credit will cost, again, \$135 million per year that we can't afford. And we need to remember that a \$1,500 home renovation tax credit does not equal quality home care. There's a big difference there.

Mr. Drummond also warns that too often, treatment delayed is treatment diminished. Seniors are waiting an average of 173 days, as I've said previously, for long-term-care beds. In December 2010, the Auditor General also found that 10,000 people were waiting for home care. We've seen across the board that these measures aren't working.

What about a regional strategy? Rural needs are different than urban needs. As we heard in our colleague's main speech, northern needs are different from south-western Ontario's needs.

Mr. Drummond says investments are needed to develop community resources and clinics at a local level. He also calls on the government to implement the findings from Dr. David Walker's report, *Caring for Our Aging Population and Addressing Alternate Levels of*

Care, which was submitted to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Dr. Walker's report says that if we want to keep seniors in their homes longer, we need a comprehensive approach, with a broad view of factors influencing health, including physical, social, nutritional, emotional, health care professional and caregiver needs. A \$1,500 tax credit does not equal a comprehensive approach.

I ask the government: Will you please do the right thing? Dollars would be better spent if they were to go into proactive measures to stop health care problems before they develop. We need to address socio-economic issues before they manifest in health problems in our vulnerable populations. We need to minimize the costs of long-term, complex illnesses.

Please, Mr. Speaker, ask the government to do the right thing.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to correct Hansard. Inadvertently, I gave the wrong phone number to the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. I think I gave him the phone number for the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, so I want to correct the record. The mayor's office is 1-613-580-2496. I apologize if any calls went in to the Right Honourable Stephen Harper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Any further questions and answers?

Seeing none, Mr. Milloy has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Seeing five members, we'll call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I can help you out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Mr. Leal has given me a deferral until tomorrow after question period. Is it the pleasure of the House that this carry? Carried.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Housing has moved adjournment of the House. All in favour? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1701.

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