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Tuesday 28 February 2012

Mardi 28 février 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 28 February 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 28 février 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**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 second 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): Debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

I rise today to talk about ensuring we strike the right balance between security and civil rights when it comes to protecting Ontario's courthouses, electricity generating plants and nuclear facilities.

Today, I will speak to the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012. If passed, the new legislation will repeal and replace the Public Works Protection Act. Simply put, the time has come to modernize the legal framework under which we protect our courthouses and critical infrastructure such as nuclear and electricity generating facilities. The Public Works Protection Act was passed at the outset of the Second World War.

Cette loi a été adoptée au début de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale en réponse à la crainte que les centrales électriques de la province, ses barrages, ses ponts et autres infrastructures publiques essentielles soient la cible de saboteurs.

Mr. Speaker, while those fears might have been legitimate more than 70 years ago, the Ontario of today faces new realities. We live in an open and democratic society where balancing civil liberties with protecting critical infrastructure installations is an important debate. We welcome the ongoing discussion, but we are not shying away from our mandate to ensure that Ontario's nuclear and electricity generating facilities are adequately protected, as well as the safety of Ontarians who live near them. And we are not shying away from our obligation to ensure our courts and those who work in our justice system are adequately protected.

Cette loi est cependant invoquée dans des circonstances limitées. Elle est appliquée chaque jour pour assurer la sécurité des tribunaux, des installations nucléaires et de certaines centrales d'énergie.

Although the current PWPA is relied on only in limited circumstances, it is used on a daily basis to provide security at electricity generating and court facilities.

The powers included in the PWPA were requested by the Toronto Police Service just ahead of the G20 summit in June 2010. There were uncertainties and vagueness associated with the PWPA that were brought to the fore as a result of its use in relation to the G20.

In 2010, the Ombudsman produced a report which raised important questions about how the PWPA works and how it was used at the time of the G20. In the wake of this, our government asked former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to review the scope and appropriateness of the PWPA and to provide recommendations.

The report recommended that the PWPA be repealed after Ontario has considered potential policy and security gaps as a result of its repeal. In response to Mr. McMurtry's report, the government committed to begin consultations on replacement legislation that would repeal the PWPA. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, there was a need for us to act, and as a result, we introduced the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act.

In his review of the PWPA, former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry found the definition of "public work" to be too broad.

One of the things we needed to define more clearly, following the report, was what should be included in the proposed legislation. The replacement legislation is more focused and builds on current uses of the PWPA for security at courthouses, nuclear facilities and large electricity generating facilities.

The Ombudsman's report also helped guide how we would replace the PWPA. In his report, the Ombudsman

made it clear that the regulation adopted at the request of the Toronto Police Service was not appropriate for a modern society.

In particular, the Ombudsman questioned why Ontarians were not informed of this regulation and the PWPA, which gave police officers powers that are not commonly used in our province, outside courthouses and nuclear facilities.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to both McMurtry and Marin. Our proposed legislation and associated regulations will identify the narrow categories of infrastructure that are protected under it. Any changes to the act would be subject to legislative debate. This is because an amendment would be needed to add other types of facilities that could be protected under our proposed legislation. We have made the process more open, transparent and clear.

0910

Much has changed in Ontario since the Second World War and the introduction of the PWPA. The outdated PWPA is no longer necessary in its current form, although some of the powers it grants are still used daily, as I have mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note, as did Mr. McMurtry, that other laws exist to help keep our critical infrastructure secure. There is the Criminal Code that gives police the powers to deal with breaches of peace and riots. Common law, too, gives the police important powers to preserve the peace and protect life and property. The Ontario Trespass to Property Act is also a potential source of police power to arrest without warrant those who are unlawfully on certain premises or who were recently unlawfully on the premises. In addition, our Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act allows an emergency order to be put in place to restrict travel and movement to and from specific areas in the event of a declared provincial emergency. Finally, regulations under the Police Services Act mandate police services to put in place procedures consistent with plans to deal with acts of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, you can see that more specific and more modern pieces of legislation have made the current PWPA outdated and unneeded.

As we began the work to repeal and replace the PWPA, a constant principle guiding our efforts was to listen to our partners. To that end, we met and listened to Ontarians and groups who helped inform our approach. In the last few months, we have consulted widely with municipalities, civil liberties advocates, representatives from the nuclear sector, electricity producers, court security, critical infrastructure and police.

I'm happy to say that with this groundwork, we have achieved a broad consensus now about how to proceed. We and our partners believe that the proposed replacement legislation achieves a balance: providing powers to protect certain facilities, but doing so in a way that minimally infringes on our civil liberties.

What we heard was clear: Transparency, openness and continued security of our critical infrastructure are not competing but are complementary objectives.

From the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, we heard that any new powers should be tailored to address unique security threats that arise within the nuclear security context and that these powers be clearly articulated and communicated to the public. I believe that this legislation addresses the concerns of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

Madam Speaker, again, this proposed legislation sets out the powers to be used at courthouses and the amendment to the Police Services Act that will make this possible.

From the energy sector, we heard that the operators of nuclear installations and electricity generating facilities require additional powers for the purpose of protecting nuclear and electricity generating facilities. I'll provide more details on the powers given by the proposed legislation in a few minutes, but let me say that we agree with our partners from the energy sector on that issue.

We have also certainly listened to former Chief Justice McMurtry. With this proposed legislation, we are meeting our commitment to repeal the PWPA and implement key recommendations of the McMurtry report.

La loi proposée cible les trois objectifs suivants :

—abroger la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics;

—proposer des modifications à la Loi sur les services policiers concernant la sécurité des tribunaux;

—établir une loi indépendante concernant la sécurité dans les installations électriques et nucléaires prescrites.

Madam Speaker, the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, if passed, will not only lead to the repeal of the PWPA, but it will give us a new law that deftly balances civil liberties with the protection of nuclear and electricity generating infrastructure. Let me give you some examples.

As it relates to court security, the legislation will address court security through an amendment to the Police Services Act. We have generally replicated, with some updates and clarifications, the powers available under the PWPA.

The legislation will provide security staff with the powers to, where reasonable:

—require any person entering or inside a courthouse to produce identification and provide information to assess their security risk, if any;

—search, without a warrant, any person, property or vehicle entering or attempting to enter premises where court proceedings are conducted;

—search, without a warrant, and using reasonable force if necessary, any person who is in custody where court proceedings are conducted or who is being transported to or from such premises or any property in the custody/care of that person.

Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasize that while the legislation may require a person entering or attempt-

ing to enter a courthouse to submit to a search, produce identification or provide information, if anyone does not want to comply, they 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 the court, they could be arrested.

Madam Speaker, these powers are justifiable measures to ensure the security of our courthouses and to help maintain the efficiency of our judicial system.

In our proposed legislation, we've narrowed the focus to electricity generating and nuclear facilities. Unlike the PWPA, this act covers very limited categories of infrastructure. The legislation will apply to prescribed electricity generating facilities and prescribed nuclear facilities.

The act permits the appointment of security personnel at these facilities who will be 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. Similar to the court security legislation, a person can simply walk away if they do not wish to submit to a search, produce identification or provide information.

0920

If they persist in entering the facility after refusing to provide information or submit to a search, security personnel can refuse entry and/or demand that the person immediately leave, and use reasonable force, if necessary, to prevent their entry or remove them. Any person who continues to try to enter and/or refuses to leave the premises could be arrested.

We're also going to establish the same offences and penalties as for court security violations: 60 days in jail or a \$2,000 fine.

The act also provides the authority to make regulations to prescribe electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities; govern the appointment of persons providing security; govern the qualifications, training, duties and oversight of persons providing security; govern the exercise of the powers of a person providing security, including powers as a peace officer; and impose duties on the operator of the restricted-access facility with respect to the provision of security services under the act.

Madam Speaker, it's important to note that adding other categories of infrastructure other than nuclear and electricity generating facilities would require amendments to the act and could not be achieved simply by a regulation. The process for changing an act is very transparent and open, and the content of any proposed amendments is subject to public debate, and that's key for us.

Throughout the legislative process and on an ongoing basis, we will continue to consult with our partners to

ensure our proposed legislation works. By talking to all parties, ensuring we listen to their input and concerns, we are much better positioned to maintain the general consensus we have achieved so far.

We now have proposed legislation that protects critical Ontario installations and respects the rights of its citizens. Madam Speaker, I enjoin the members of this House to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm honoured to follow Minister Meilleur and rise in the House to support the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012.

As the minister has stated, we need to modernize the legal framework for the protection of some of our most vital infrastructure and of our courthouses. We know that despite the fact that the Public Works Protection Act is used in a limited fashion, it is relied upon on a daily basis to provide security at our nuclear and electricity generating facilities and Ontario courthouses.

As we move to repeal and replace the PWPA, I believe it's important to look back at the situation that was facing our predecessors when the act was enacted.

The origin of the PWPA goes back to the start of the Second World War. At that time, our predecessors in the House were worried that our power plants might be sabotaged. In fact, our predecessors were so concerned that on September 19, 1939, the House convened for an urgent and extraordinary session to adopt this law. Our records show that the law was adopted in under three days and with bipartisan support.

I have some quotes here from the leaders of the day, to give you a flavour of the importance of the PWPA at the time. In a *Globe and Mail* article dated September 20, 1939, the Conservative opposition leader, George Drew, was quoted as saying that "he agreed with the act and would support it. [With] the country at war, it was necessary to protect hydro, the railways, public works, and industries linked with war production."

Premier Hepburn was even more blunt. In the same article, he was quoted as follows: "The greatest service a Nazi sympathizer could do would be to destroy these plants."

Fortunately, there were no attacks on our facilities. The war ended, but the law stayed on our books and drew little attention. In short, you might say that the PWPA was an early form of anti-terrorism legislation.

But a lot has changed since 1939. For example, the general criminal law, modern federal anti-terrorism legislation and provincial emergency legislation give our police services the tools to prevent, investigate and manage the fallout of terrorism. In other words, we would not create any legal gaps for ourselves by repealing the PWPA and replacing it with the legislation we have proposed for the facilities that make use of the current act.

In addition to the threat of terrorism, some stakeholders have asked how the proposed legislation might

impact security during the 2015 Pan Am Games and similar major events.

Police have powers under common law and statutes such as the Criminal Code of Canada to enable them to maintain public order when this is required. Temporary security for major events is generally dealt with at the local level by the police of jurisdiction and affected municipalities. The province will work with stakeholders to ensure an appropriate and effective security plan is in place for the Pan Am Games.

The bill before the House achieves a balance between the need to provide powers to protect certain facilities where the need for that protection is not questioned, against the desire to use those powers in a way that minimally infringes on our civil liberties.

The bill certainly responds to key recommendations made by former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. In his report, Mr. McMurtry concluded that there was a need for the continued protection of these installations, but found the original PWPA to be an outdated legal tool with too broad a definition of what constitutes a public work. He therefore recommended the repeal and replacement of the PWPA. That's what the McGuinty government is doing.

Ontario is the largest nuclear jurisdiction in North America. There are 16 nuclear reactors capable of generating electricity and supplying Ontario with energy to power our industries and light our homes.

But whereas nuclear installations in Quebec and New Brunswick are in remote areas, two of our most important nuclear generating stations are in Durham region: Pickering and Darlington.

Our challenges are different. Securing these facilities requires balancing the powers given to those protecting them with the rights of Ontarians who reside nearby or conduct recreational activities near these installations.

The replacement legislation would allow for the current use of the powers granted under the PWPA for security at courthouses, nuclear facilities and large electricity generating facilities.

But there are differences in how these powers would be applied, and they are in line with what we have heard from Mr. McMurtry and the Ombudsman in their respective reports.

One such area where we have not replicated the powers found under the PWPA is for the so-called "approach" to a prescribed facility. This is particularly relevant for our partners from the nuclear sector.

The PWPA currently gives guards the authority to exercise their powers in the approaches to a public work. The approach to a facility was a concern for Mr. 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 the premises of the nuclear facility, any security issues should be addressed in partnership with the police of jurisdiction.

While we may have heard diverging opinions on this particular issue during our thorough consultations, the proposed legislation has broad support among all key stakeholders. I believe this to be a just reflection of the balanced nature of the bill.

We know that the G20 summit in Toronto in June 2010 led to many questions on the usefulness of the PWPA. A security-led event of this magnitude is uncommon, even for a large city like Toronto. The hectic pace of the events during those few days in June highlighted the tremendous pressure our police services can face in such situations. However, Madam Speaker, Ontarians are protected by some of the most professional and best-trained police officers in the world. What we needed to focus our attention on was protecting some of the most vital infrastructure.

0930

As the minister stated, more modern and focused legislation ensures that critical facilities can be protected. That is why we are moving with the repeal and replacement of the PWPA. We are doing so in the spirit of openness and transparency. We have consulted with all the sectors involved, from the municipalities to the police organizations, from civil liberties groups to power companies, from Canada's nuclear regulators to provincial ministries and Canadian federal departments. We have been thorough, and that's one of the reasons behind the broad support for this bill.

The replacement legislation is focused on what we know to be the current uses of the PWPA for security at courthouses, nuclear facilities and large electricity generating facilities. Owners of other public works and the police have sufficient authority to address security needs at these facilities under other legislation, including the Trespass to Property Act.

It is one of the motivations behind our decision to make the addition of any new category of infrastructure possible only through legislative amendments. Changing an act is, by its nature, a transparent and open process. The content of any proposed amendment is subject to debates in the House and in committees. Public input would be sought. Once again, Madam Speaker, the process will be open and transparent, and that's essential for us in helping to maintain the trust of Ontarians and for them to know that their safety and the respect of their charter rights is paramount for our government.

If a member of the public wishes to conduct business inside a courthouse or if they wish to enter a nuclear or electricity generating facility, they will have to abide by the security procedures. However, if someone does not wish to subject themselves to these security measures, they have the right to simply walk away.

All Canadian provinces have some form of legislation in place that specifically addresses court security and powers of court security guards. Our proposal is generally consistent with the legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions.

We have made provisions in the proposed legislation to ensure that the PWPA is not repealed before all

necessary measures to protect courthouses and nuclear and electricity generating facilities are in place. There will be no gaps in ensuring the safety of these vital facilities while regulations are being developed.

The accompanying regulations will be developed in partnership with our stakeholders. The ministry will undertake further consultations on the regulations. At a minimum, however, regulations will be needed with respect to the prescribed facilities and the appointment of guards before the repeal can be proclaimed. The regulatory framework will be clearly spelled out.

In summary, we believe that the proposed legislation strikes a just balance between security and civil rights when it comes to protecting Ontario courthouses, electricity generating plants and nuclear facilities.

We are making our law more modern to reflect the values shared by Ontarians, values that have evolved since 1939 and the start of the Second World War. We no longer fear saboteurs operating in the dark of night and menacing our power and water treatment plants, our dams or our bridges. We need no longer depend on a piece of legislation drafted more than 70 years ago to know that our critical infrastructure is secure. We rely on sophisticated police services and more modern legislation to deal with the unexpected.

We need to update how we protect our vital installations and civil liberties. Madam Speaker, our proposed bill does that. I enjoin the members of this House to support this legislation.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be here today to listen to the leadoff on Bill 34, and I'm waiting for our critic Mr. Yakabuski to give a definitive assessment of what I believe is a long-overdue look at this thing. In fact, before they invoked some changes during the last G20 meetings here in Ontario, they should probably have looked at it then.

I can only say this: that in the interest of my constituents on the issue around court security as well as other power plants, it's important to have the right rules and procedures in place at all times. In fact, I suspect even today, many members of the Legislature have visited the facilities within their riding, whether it's a nuclear plant or other facility—and they have very adequate and very stringent security requirements today, I believe.

I've been to the Darlington plant; I know other members have been there as well. And the Pickering and Bruce plants are all very much up to scratch. They don't need some interventions.

There's a bit of concern on my part on the court security part of it. I've been to court as a visitor many times. I've never been there on a charge; I've actually been a witness to things. I know others who have been there for a charge.

The point is, I hope they don't create a lot of red tape. When they talk about openness and transparency, which many of the members have talked about—the questions in the Legislature in the last few weeks have all been

about the lack of openness and transparency. I was expecting, the other day, that the Minister of Health would stand up and resign because of the lack of openness and transparency in the Ornge helicopter incident.

I suspect that, on this side, our critic will make our position very clear. We'll listen carefully. I hope this will go to committee and that you'll be open to amendments that might be brought up by the opposition. In that respect, I think it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Make no mistake: During the G20, behind closed doors, the Premier of this province got together with a handful of people—we don't know who they were; we will never know—invoked a secret regulation that nobody knew existed, quite frankly, in the province of Ontario, and with a stroke of a pen took away civil liberties from everyone in this province and in this city. That's what happened. The New Democratic Party called for a public inquiry, as did the civil liberties association—it never happened. We did get an investigation. It made several recommendations. But make no mistake: This was a terrible time.

I was on the streets with others during those days, demonstrating. On the Sunday, as a United Church minister, I held a joint worship service down on King Street—a worship service that was broken up and dispatched by people in riot gear. Madam Speaker, this is not how a democracy works. And might I remind everyone in this House, this was while the House was in session. Not once did this Premier ask for even his own backbenchers' input, never mind the rest of this House—not once. This is unprecedented in our democracy. Even during the two wars, when the Parliament met in Ottawa, they did so with the other parties—they did so in secret, but they did so with the full consent of other parties, not just a handful of people.

Not since, I might mention, the War Measures Act—another Liberal head of state, Pierre Trudeau—have our civil liberties in this country been so egregiously breached. So here we have an attempt to rectify that. We say, too little, too late.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I did listen intently this morning as Minister Meilleur provided her leadoff and then as my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt talked about the need to bring in Bill 34.

I thought the member from Scarborough–Agincourt certainly provided the historical context. We know that Canada declared war in September 1939, about three days after it was declared by Great Britain. There were a number of measures that were brought in, provincially and nationally. Of course, the federal Parliament of Canada brought in the War Measures Act, and here in Ontario we brought in the Public Works Protection Act. If you read the newspapers of the day, the *Toronto Star*,

the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Telegram—of course, we know the United States didn't enter the war until December 1941, two years after Canada had declared war, and there was this feeling that there was going to be a rash of Nazi sympathizers who were going to come across the border, the Great Lakes etc. and sabotage facilities right here in the province of Ontario. So we look at that. Legislation was brought in at that particular time to deal with circumstances some seven-plus decades ago that were quite different from what we face today.

0940

Of course, we know the War Measures Act that was sitting on the books in Ottawa for many, many years was certainly changed and a successor piece of legislation was brought in. Indeed, Bill 34 will become the successor piece of legislation of the Public Works Protection Act.

There will obviously be the opportunity for Bill 34 to go to committee to be reviewed extensively at committee. We'll hear from many, many groups. But it's certainly clear, post-9/11, that there is a need to have a piece of legislation to protect the security of key facilities in this province.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to provide some preliminary comments to Bill 34.

Clearly, this piece of legislation is a reaction to; this is not an initiative that you had intended to bring forward. This is something that you were forced to bring forward, based on Chief Justice McMurtry's and the Ontario Ombudsman's reports.

What we saw, and we were referencing it earlier, is a reaction to what happened as a result of the G20 and the secret regulations that were passed prior to, without knowledge and without any public consultation or input, let alone any consultation from the other sides and participants in the Ontario Legislature.

It was a shameful time to be passing regulations and not notifying the public or the members of the Ontario Legislature of what you had passed in secret, and we saw the fallout, quite frankly, with G20.

So I'm pleased that we have brought forward something, but I'm not going to allow you to delude yourselves into thinking it's something you wanted to do. It's something you were forced to do as a response to two very—how shall we say?—pointed reports that came out from Chief Justice McMurtry and the Ontario Ombudsman. We needed to have those initiatives come forward before there was any reaction or action from this government.

So, while I'm pleased to see Bill 34 come forward—obviously, a piece of legislation from 1939 needs to be reviewed and updated—let's not pretend to think that you did it because you wanted to. You did it because you were forced to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Let me say thank you for the comments of the MPPs from Durham, Parkdale–High Park, Peterborough and Dufferin–Caledon.

First of all, let me say also thank you to the Ombudsman and also to Chief Justice McMurtry for the good advice that they gave us.

I'd like also to say thank you to Nathalie Des Rosiers, who is the general counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, who helped us to put forward a piece of legislation that will cover our nuclear facilities, our courthouses and our electricity generating facilities.

The question was asked if it's going to committee. Yes, when we have committees, it will go to committee, and I hope to get other input. But there was widespread consultation with people from all walks of life, including our police forces, the civil liberties groups and our judges.

We need to protect our courthouses, and also we need to protect our nuclear and electricity generating facilities. I look forward to more discussion on this. But the PWPA is not going to be repealed before we have this piece of legislation.

I will also invite the federal government to act on protecting our nuclear facilities, because it's in their domain but they have not acted yet. After consultation with them, they're not ready to act to cover the nuclear facilities, but those workers in the nuclear facilities want to be protected. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Yes; the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Second reading debate adjourned.

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

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0945 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure today to introduce, in the west members' gallery, residents of Sarnia–Lambton here for the Ontario Good Roads/ROMA reception: Mr. and Mrs. Gary and Shirley Depooter, Dennis Chepeka, Leo Denys, Matt Deline and Jason Cole, all residents of Sarnia–Lambton and proud to be here in the Legislature with us today.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce page Adrian Hucal's family, who are here to watch him perform his duties today; they're in the west gallery: his mom, Lesia Hucal; his dad, Morris Hucal; and his sister, Kalyanna.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce a very good friend and a great volunteer in my campaign, Michael Broeders, who is visiting from Ottawa. He is accompanied by Geoff Turner from my office. Michael, welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to introduce Pat O'Reilly in the gallery, a councillor from the city of Kawartha Lakes and here for ROMA and Good Roads. Thank you for coming.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome later this morning, in the public gallery, class 14 of the advanced agricultural leadership program to Queen's Park today. The program focuses on local, provincial, national and international rural and agri-food sector issues. I am a proud alumnus of class 6 of this program, as is Mark Wales, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and I can tell you first-hand what a wonderful learning experience it is.

Each class travels to Queen's Park as part of their 19-month program, and this year they are learning about social media and how to communicate the rural and agricultural message to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have plenty of guests here today from ROMA.

Mr. Rod Jackson: They're all yours?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: They're all mine.

I have the mayor of Malahide, Dave Mennill; I have Anne Marie McWilliam, the wife of the mayor of Dunwich-Dutton; I have Wayne Casier, the councillor of Bayham; I have Marion Page, the wife of the councillor of Dunwich-Dutton, and Don Page, the councillor of Dunwich-Dutton; I have Paul Ens, mayor of Bayham; and Ed Ketchebaw, councillor of Bayham. I also have Bill Walters, mayor of central Elgin and also the warden of Elgin county. He's been waiting for a meeting with the Minister of Health, so hopefully her office will actually contact him.

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

In the visitors' gallery this morning, up on our side, we've got with us today in the House two students from the University of Akron Canadian studies work experience program. Please join me in welcoming Lindsay Powley and Will White as they begin their 10-week placement for the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Thornhill. Welcome to Canada.

As well, in the Speaker's gallery today we have, from the state Senate of New Hampshire, Senator Lou D'Allesandro, and Mrs. Pat D'Allesandro. Please give a warm welcome to our guests who are here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario.

In fact, there have been 61 consecutive months now, over five years, where Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. I don't know if that's ever happened in the history of our province.

You at least had one idea to help make Ontario open for business investment again, and that was to hit a 10% business tax rate by 2013. The Ontario PC caucus wants to see Ontario again as the best place in all of Canada to find a good job, to start a business and to see it grow.

Premier, please tell us that you're not going wobbly when it comes to lower business taxes in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we will not waver in terms of the balance that we bring to our economic policy in Ontario.

My honourable colleague will know, for example, that just as we have reduced corporate taxes, adopted the HST and eliminated the capital taxes, so have we also invested record amounts in developing the skills and education levels of our people.

So what we're doing is working hard to bring that competitive advantage that consists not solely of the tax environment but as well the investments we're making in our human resources.

Where we really want to compete is at the highest end for the highest wages, the highest quality of life, the highest standard of living, and that's with the highest skill levels. That's what we're up to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: But, Premier, you are wavering. You said you're not wavering, but evidently you are doing just that. For some time, you said you would hit a business tax rate of 10% by 2013; you said this was one of the best ways to attract those types of jobs to Ontario. In the last number of weeks, you and your finance minister have been wavering consistently on this.

The problem I have, Premier, is that businesses can invest anywhere in Canada, North America or the world. They want to make sure they have a stable approach when it comes to opening Ontario up for investment. That's the kind of province we in the Ontario PC Party would like to create.

Now is not the time to go wobbly and change direction; that sends a very dangerous signal to investors. So if you say that you're not wavering, can we then take that as a fact that you will ensure that we do hit that target of a 10% business tax rate by 2013?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the importance of being consistent when it comes to economic policy and tax policy in perspective, which is why from the get-go we supported the adoption of the HST in Ontario. We knew that would be a difficult thing for Ontarians to come to grips with. But my honourable colleague was at one point in favour of that, and then he stood against that. So I think it's really important he offers good advice with respect to consistency in terms of tax policy.

Adopting the HST has given a significant competitive advantage; it's a value-added tax. We've caught up to some 100 other countries around the world that have that

kind of a tax in place. It has given our businesses a competitive advantage. It wouldn't hurt for my honourable colleague to say it was the right thing for us to do as a government.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, this is my second day of pursuing this line of questioning the Premier, and he has yet to answer my question directly. We do have a motion in the Legislature tomorrow, so I guess we'll see—finally, we'll get to a point of certainty.

I do hope, Premier, in the next 24 hours you will reinforce your spine and that of your caucus to continue to make Ontario open for job creation. You actually were on the right path when it came to heading towards more open investment and lower business taxes on the business tax rate at 10%.

Now, I don't want to engage in a silly game of semantics—whether you want to call this a tax increase or a tax freeze—the reality is, if you get off this path, taxes will be higher in 2012 and 2013 than they otherwise would be.

When we have a jobs crisis in the province—we've lost 60,000 jobs since the election alone—surely you can tell us you've not changed your mind, that you will continue with this plan to hit that tax rate for 2013.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to assure my colleague that we will continue to bring a balanced and thoughtful approach to economic policy in Ontario.

We went ahead with the HST because it makes our businesses more competitive, but my honourable colleague voted against that. We reduced corporate taxes in the past because we thought that would make our businesses more competitive, but my honourable colleague and his colleagues voted against that. We eliminated capital taxes in Ontario; they voted against that. We reduced small business taxes in Ontario; they voted against that. We have measures in place now that effectively reduce the tax on new business investment in Ontario by one half; they voted against all those measures.

So Ontarians know on whose side we stand. We're in favour of balance. We're in favour of a thoughtful approach to make sure Ontario businesses remain competitive so we can support our health care and our schools.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. It's regrettable that we see this sort of sophomoric approach from the Premier when it comes to a very important issue. For the Premier to suggest that we were against lowering taxes on job creation or on consumers is ludicrous and it's a distraction from the question that I'm bringing to him today.

1040

The Premier says they're taking a balanced approach. I'll make this point, Premier. You made an early, reckless

decision to actually increase business taxes: You moved them up to 14%. You increased them on manufacturers and on small businesses. Then you changed your mind and said you would lower them, and now it appears you're going to go back on that yet again by having higher taxes in 2012-13. So, Premier, this is the farthest thing from balanced; this is actually a rollercoaster ride that you're taking businesses on in the province of Ontario.

I ask again: Do you think that makes Ontario less attractive for business investment, when you keep going up and down, back and forth on this very important issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, our cuts to the corporate sector, starting with the elimination of the capital tax, followed by harmonization of the collection of corporate taxes, followed by the lowering of corporate taxes—we've taken the manufacturing and process rate down from 12% to 10%. We've taken the general rate down from 14% to 13.5%.

We brought in the HST on the advice of the chamber of commerce and a variety of other business organizations. The member and his party voted against it, Mr. Speaker.

There has to be balance in public policy, and as we face the challenges of the coming year we will continue to take a balanced, fair and responsible position on all of the choices we make. We think that's the right way. We think we've done a great deal for the business community and we want to continue to work with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier if I could, Speaker.

Premier, your finance minister cited the chamber of commerce. I'll remind you that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in a recent pre-budget submission, said this: "A reduction in corporate tax rates is the most helpful initiative for helping businesses in the short term and improving long-term competitiveness." So the chamber of commerce would agree with the PC caucus that hitting that 10% tax rate will make Ontario open for investment.

You know, you do have a debt crisis; there's no doubt. You've spent us into a big hole. But you can't cut your way to prosperity; you also need a growth plan, Premier. You need a jobs plan. We've put forward ideas like modernizing our apprenticeship system to create 200,000 skilled jobs; an energy approach to make energy reliable and affordable. An essential part of that is to make sure we keep those tax rates at 10%. Effectively, you'll have higher tax rates. How can we attract jobs if you're increasing taxes on businesses in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me read a quote from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, from their Emerging Stronger document, page 6, which says: "Ontario's overall tax environment has improved over the last several years, thanks in part to the elimination of the capital tax and the adoption of the ... HST. These changes are

helping Ontario become more competitive and productive.” We couldn’t agree with them more, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to strike a balanced approach in tax policy and expenditure policy. That’s why we’re looking at every recommendation in the Drummond report. We’re taking advice from others—I’ve done a variety of town halls across the province—and I look forward to making the right choices to take a fair and balanced approach as we move forward across tax policy, expenditure policy and in the management of our assets and liabilities.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, I guess it’s obvious. The vote is tomorrow, but we can hear pretty clearly from the finance minister and the Premier that they’re abandoning the plan to have a 10% business tax rate. Effectively, taxes will be higher on job creators. We’ll get to the vote tomorrow. I view this with sadness, but not surprise.

To the Premier’s comments in the papers today, where he is going after Alberta and the oil sands: Premier, there used to be a time when Ontario strode across Confederation with pride and with confidence, and it shows how far we’ve fallen that the Premier of the province is trying to pull other provinces down. I have a different suggestion: Instead of pulling other provinces down and playing this game of envy, let’s make Ontario strong again. Let’s invest in our province, make us attractive, and the best way to do that: help to lower business taxes in the province—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister of Finance?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity—I sincerely do—raised by my honourable colleague to speak to this.

First of all, I want to say to Canadians living in every part of the country outside of Ontario: On behalf of the people of Ontario, I want to thank them for working so hard and so well, contributing to a strong Canada.

I also want to assure all Canadians living outside of Ontario that Ontarians are doing their share. We’re focused on building a stronger economy. We understand that our greatest strength is our people. That’s why we’re going ahead with full-day kindergarten. That’s why we’re increasing our test scores and our graduation rates. That’s why we’ve increased accessibility to our post-secondary institutions. That’s why the enrolment rate is way up. That’s why we have one of the highest levels of education for our graduates in the western world.

We’re doing our part to strengthen Canada, we’re committed to this cause, and we thank all Canadians who are equally committed to the great cause of our country, a strong country built on a strong Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sit down, please. Sit down, please. Thank you. Order, please. Leader of the third party.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Health have indicated that Dr. Chris Mazza’s \$1.4-million paycheque at Ornge was inappropriate. My question to the Premier is, can he cite a figure that he thinks is more appropriate than \$1.4 million?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I think what’s really important here is that we have made decisive changes in the leadership at Ornge.

We have a new interim CEO, who is working very hard to bring about changes that matter to the people of Ontario and to the front-line staff at Ornge. We have an excellent new board that is very engaged in ensuring that we have excellent air ambulance service in this province.

There is good change happening. This morning, I went to the Ornge air base here in Toronto. I spoke to front-line staff, and what I hear from them is that they see the change that is happening and they look forward to more of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That’s the obvious problem: They can’t cite a figure that’s more appropriate.

Over the last several decades, the salaries at the top levels of our health care system have increased dramatically. In fact, just over the last couple of years, they’ve increased dramatically, sometimes exponentially. As we first saw at eHealth and now we see at Ornge, the business for consultants and lawyers has been extremely lucrative. Does it surprise the Premier at all that people think that the health care system in Ontario is a place where they can get rich?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member has raised this issue before, and I have to tell you I share the concern. That is why we are working with the Ontario Hospital Association and the hospital organizations to really develop a framework that makes sense to the people of this province.

We do want our hospital administrators to be well paid—they do very, very important work—but we need to have a framework where we can explain to people why those numbers are what they are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Northumberland–Quinte West, come to order.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families who watch emergency rooms close and waiting lists grow are tired of seeing health dollars spent on everything but patient care.

The scandal at Ornge is going to keep on unravelling, but the Premier can take steps in this very budget to change the culture in Ontario. Will he crack down on the growing reliance on private sector consultants and private

sector solutions, and put a cap on skyrocketing salaries of our executives and CEOs in the public sector? Or is much more of the same from the Liberal government all we can expect?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier has actually asked the Minister of Finance to look at this very issue, to bring forth some options not just about the health care sector. There are issues about senior leadership compensation right across the broader public sector.

We need to make sure that every dollar we spend goes to better patient care. That's part of the mandate of this government and it's part of the mandate of the Minister of Finance.

1050

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Health. In a letter to the editor, former Minister of Health George Smitherman wrote in reference to Ornge: "That the ministry did not conduct proper oversight, and did not ... understand what was happening at Ornge, is a commentary on my successors and the ministry."

My question to the minister is, does she agree with her predecessor's assessment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I fundamentally disagree with the opinion expressed in that letter to the editor. We are taking very strong actions at Ornge to change the way that business is being conducted there. I have now visited three bases. I have spoken to groups of front-line staff, and they tell me that they see a noticeable difference, a noticeable improvement, in just the few weeks that we have had new leadership in place.

Do they see there's more to do? Yes, they do. But are they very encouraged and very optimistic about the changes at Ornge? Absolutely.

I'm proud of the work they do. I will never apologize for praising the work of front-line staff, Speaker. They are doing superb work and I am very grateful for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm quite shocked that the minister was amused by my question. It's quite disturbing.

The former minister went on to write this: "No piece of legislation is perfect and 'unintended consequences' are very normal, but you only learn of 'unintended consequences' if you are engaged. It seems clear that nobody at" the Ministry of Health "has been very interested in those helicopters flying overhead."

Does the minister agree with her predecessor that she failed to engage?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: From the first time I heard about issues at Ornge, I asked questions. We have gone through a deliberate process, Speaker. It came to the point where I became satisfied that Ornge was not interested in providing answers—not to me, not to my ministry officials and not to the Auditor General of Ontario. It was then that I had a meeting in my office

with the senior leadership at Ornge and I said to them, "Provide this information. You are required to provide this information. I expect you to provide this information." Within only a few days, they started to supply some information around salary disclosure. It was very troubling. It is then that I sent in a forensic audit team, because I knew that there was trouble at Ornge. I sent in a forensic audit team. They did their work and handed it off to the Ontario Provincial Police.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in the same letter, Mr. Smitherman continues: "Pretending that the" Minister "of Health," who "provides about 90% of Ornge's money, was or is powerless to correct any operational deficiencies ... is not credible."

The minister needs to answer some tough questions that she has been avoiding, frankly, for years. Did she, as her predecessor maintains, fail to do her job, or did the former minister and the Premier who appointed him fail to do theirs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the people of Ontario want to know what we have done to fix the problem and what we are going to do to make sure it never happens again.

We will be introducing legislation to amend the Ambulance Act. It will include provisions similar to those we have in hospitals, such as enabling the government to appoint a supervisor or an investigator in exceptional circumstances. It will give the government ability to appoint members to the board of Ornge. It will allow the government to prescribe terms of a performance agreement with the government of Ontario. We will introduce a new performance agreement, and it will carry the provision that any changes to the corporate structure must have the approval of the minister.

We're making change, Speaker, and the change is for the better.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: The scandal continues to grow at Ornge. The Minister of Health continues to boast about new leadership at Ornge, and yet the two individuals who were responsible for the operational decisions that put patients at risk are still there. Rick Potter continues as chief operating officer, with Steve Farquhar as the vice-president of operations. Both were responsible for dispatch protocols that delayed launch times. Both were involved in the purchase of helicopters that, quite frankly, were unsafe so that paramedics couldn't even conduct CPR.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: Both were involved in circumventing procurement policies. I'd like to ask the minister this: How did these two individuals manage to negotiate their immunity? And, at the end of the day, I'd like to know from the minister: Was she lied to about their involvement—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'd ask the member to guide his time. When I say "question" or when I say "answer" for all members, it's approximately 10 seconds afterwards; I'd ask you to wrap up very quickly, please.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Newmarket–Aurora has obviously been focused on this issue, and I just want to compare and contrast some of the advice he has given us, Speaker.

On January 26, Mr. Klees said, "The new board is headed in the right direction. These are competent people." But then, last Thursday, the very same member said, "We haven't placed qualified people at the head of Ornge."

On February 14, the member opposite said, "The performance agreement was a flawed agreement." On February 28, just two weeks later, he had a complete change of opinion and he said that the performance agreement very clearly stipulates that the Ministry of Health has oversight responsibility.

The member opposite claims to have raised this issue repeatedly in the House. Last year, out of 360 questions, Speaker, three were on Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, why does the minister not know that Rick Potter was intimately involved in the purchase of the Agusta helicopters and signed off on interiors that didn't even allow paramedics to administer CPR?

By now, she must also be aware that the same Rick Potter, who is part of her management team, lied about having an MBA and allowed that to be published in a prospectus to woo international investors in Ornge.

Speaking of MBAs, the minister must also be aware that Steve Farquhar, who is now two years away from retirement, is continuing as a diligent student of the \$90,000 MBA program being paid for by Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: Front-line staff, paramedics and pilots want to know why those two people are still running the operation. Can the minister—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have put in very strong leadership at Ornge. They are doing their job.

Some of the decisions that the member opposite has raised have been reversed. The interiors of the helicopters are now able to accommodate CPR. They are able to accommodate people who have to sit upright. I have had front-line paramedics demonstrate to me exactly what those changes involve. It is not the long-term solution, but it absolutely is a short-term solution.

The front-line paramedics talked to me about Ornge changing the protocol for immediate takeoff. There was a delay put in place. That delay now has been removed by the new leadership.

The changes are being made. We will do our part by bringing in new legislation, and the people at Ornge are doing their jobs.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To the Minister of Health: In news reports today, Ornge's aviation chief said that he knew about a \$6.7-million payment from Agusta-Westland to Ornge Peel, Chris Mazza's spinoff for-profit company, allegedly in exchange for marketing services related to the purchase of 12 helicopters for \$144 million. Can the minister say whether \$6.7 million worth of work was done for this for-profit company?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On this question, I have to say: We need to let the OPP do their work.

I called in a forensic audit team. They spent several weeks with a very large team of auditors. It came to the point where I had to ask the OPP to investigate this. We must not jeopardize any investigation, and I for one want to see justice done. That will happen only if the OPP is given the authority to conduct their investigation.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Minister, the Financial Times reported last evening that Finmeccanica, a parent company to AgustaWestland, is facing a probe in India over financial irregularities involving a €560-million purchase of 12 helicopters. An Italian investigation into corruption in 2011 forced the chairman of this helicopter company to resign.

Can the minister say whether the OPP's investigation involves this helicopter company?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I simply will not comment on the OPP investigation, and I would urge the member opposite, if he has any information that might be helpful to that investigation, to please share that with the Ontario Provincial Police.

Speaker, this is a chamber. We all have the same goals. We want to see integrity at Ornge. We want to see excellent air ambulance service. A critical part of that is that we let the OPP do their work.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Ms. Dipika Damerla: This morning my question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as we all know, these are very challenging times for Ontario. We've gone through a very tough recession during which this government made a number of much-needed investments to keep the economy going, and now it's time to turn our attention to eliminating the deficit. We know that the Drummond commission has made a number of recommendations on this, including several on education.

One of these recommendations is the elimination of full-day kindergarten. Now, this has caused a lot of concern in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville because parents intuitively know that full-day kindergarten is not only about giving the best start to their

children, but it's also about helping parents save money on child care.

Minister, can you please tell this House what—

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for her advocacy on behalf of the families she represents.

Speaker, we have worked very hard over the last number of years to rebuild the public education system after some very, very challenging and very difficult times under the previous government. We have got our test scores up, we've got our grad rates up, and now we're building a historic new investment in our earliest learners called full-day kindergarten.

We understand and know the importance of full-day kindergarten to families in this province. Registration is happening right now, and that's why we've been very clear that we're going to move ahead with full-day kindergarten. We will invest more than \$1.5 billion in full-day kindergarten by the time that it's fully rolled out. And next year alone, Speaker, we'll invest an additional \$300 million.

We will make the tough choices, but I can tell you we will always put the education of our children first.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Minister, thank you for that response. I know that some members of the opposition have publicly said that they would eliminate full-day kindergarten. They have said that investing in our youngest learners is something we cannot afford. I'm so proud to be a member of a party and a government that is committed to education because education is the only way Ontario is going to continue to be prosperous.

When this party took office, we worked to restore confidence in our publicly funded education system. I know that in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, there are now 41 full-day kindergarten classes across eight schools. I know that kids in my riding and across the province are benefiting from a world-class education, but I also know that these are tough times and, as the Premier has said, we have some tough choices to make.

Can the minister tell this House what our plans for education are, given our fiscal realities?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Leadership is about making those tough choices, and I can tell the people of Ontario that we will always choose to put our children first. We will choose to invest 300 million new dollars in full-day kindergarten next year, and that's in sharp contrast to the opposition, who, when they have a choice, when the Leader of the Opposition has a choice to decide where he will make cuts—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: —where he will suggest cuts, his go-to place—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition always makes his first go-to place public education, and I can tell you that we stand in sharp contrast to that. We will invest \$300 million into public education and more full-day kindergarten next year. And we will make the choice: Rather than horse racing, we will put children first. Those are tough choices. That's what Ontarians expect. We will make those choices for the kids in this province.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. With each passing day, it becomes more apparent that the minister does not know what is happening at Ornge and that the public's confidence in her ability to provide oversight is eroding. But not only is the public's confidence eroding, the confidence of the employees at the Ministry of Health is as well.

We have a leaked memo from your ministry indicating that the 10 new helicopters purchased by Ornge are not permitted to enter American airspace and transport patients to US destinations. Minister, can you confirm that Ornge has not received FAA approval to enter American airspace?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that the front-line staff at Ornge have expressed in no uncertain terms their full support for the steps we are taking at Ornge. I've now visited three bases. I have had full and frank discussions with people about the challenges they face.

There is no question that the steps this government has taken to put new leadership in place, the decisions that the new leadership has made, are making a difference in the lives of these front-line workers. They feel that they've got the ability to exercise their scope of practice in a way they didn't have before. They're seeing positive change, they're seeing the benefit to the patients they serve, and I know that they know that we're doing the right thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, the minister's lack of response to a simple question is unbelievable. You don't know what's going on in your ministry. You don't even have the information in your head that's in your briefing notes. It now is up to staff at the ministry to continue to provide information about what's going on at the air ambulance service.

Not only is there no approval for these aircraft, but we've also learned that local ambulance EMS services are not aware of the fact that they might need to be available.

I say to you, Minister, in light of the fact you don't know what's going on, will you step down and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sit down, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To answer the question, no, I will not resign. I've got a lot of work to do, and I'm doing that work.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews:—regarding the question of the certification of the new aircraft in the United States is that these planes are, of course, certified in Canada, and we are waiting for approval in the United States. The aircraft are safe; they are doing their job. These are excellent new aircraft. We have highly trained pilots who are flying them.

We are taking the appropriate steps to ensure we have excellent care for the people of Ontario.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan American and Parapan American Games. In January, Paul Henderson raised the alarm bells that the Pan Am Games are going over budget. The government said that everything is fine but refuses to open the books to the public to prove what they are saying is true.

Speaker, will this minister confirm for us right now whether there are cost overruns—and how much are they?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the member across the way. I also appreciate the input and the concerns raised by others who have advised us of their issues, keeping in mind, of course, that to date—and I can assure you—less than 3% of the budget has been spent, and that is because we're still negotiating the venues and preparing the plans.

We are doing our utmost to maintain everything on time and on budget. I'm very confident with what is being done up to this point.

We should all be very proud, Mr. Speaker, of the work done by all of us who are welcoming the Pan Am Games to Ontario. It's going to produce over 15,000 jobs for this province. It's going to provide a legacy of athleticism, social engagement and, more importantly, economic progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1110

Mr. Paul Miller: Because you have spent 3% of the budget doesn't mean there aren't going to be overruns. The last time the financial information for the Pan Am Games was updated was in 2009, Minister. Ontarians demand to have current and regularly updated financial information. New figures have been promised, but we're still waiting to find out when they will be released.

Speaker, why won't this minister reassure Ontarians that the Pan Am Games are on budget and release the financial updates now? We want to know now, not when it's all over.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have independent assessments of the budget being made. Pricewaterhouse-

Coopers has been involved; Deloitte and Touche has been involved with the federal government. All levels of government are involved with the direction of the Pan Am. Ontario has taken the extra steps of putting conditions on our approvals with the Toronto 2015 committee. They are doing their utmost.

We are still negotiating the venues. For us to now proceed to suggest which ones they will be and at what price would be inappropriate, because then we're establishing the price ahead of the proponents. Let the people do their job transparently and effectively, and within a few months we should have everything out.

I am anxious to advise the entire province of where we're at, but we need to take the proper steps to get there first.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The skilled trades are an essential part of Ontario's economy, and our government has worked hard to attract more people to the skilled trades through investments in apprenticeship programs and infrastructure upgrades to our colleges and training centres.

As a result of these efforts, there are 120,000 Ontario apprentices learning a trade today, nearly 60,000 more than there were in 2003. Moving forward, Ontario will need to train even more skilled trades workers, and the modernization of the apprenticeship and skilled trades system is critical to meeting the future demands of our economy.

Some industries have expressed interest in playing a larger administrative role in the apprenticeship system, but we must remember that our highest priority is ensuring that administrative decisions are made with the health and safety of all Ontarians in mind.

Minister, how are you ensuring that these individuals in the skilled trades industry have a voice through the College of Trades?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have an excellent board at the College of Trades. We have now elevated the College of Trades to the same level of lawyers, nurses, teachers and others with professional colleges. So for the first time in Canada and the first time in Ontario's history, people in the trades are there.

The other thing that's rather extraordinary about this, Mr. Speaker, is this is an extraordinary partnership between business leaders, labour leaders and educators, who are looking at the details of what kinds of ratios and what fields should be covered.

Mr. Speaker, I was leaving work yesterday and I ran into a young fellow who had done all of his training in information technology and decided to become a plumber. We had a college—he was listening to this and he said, "You know, I don't want one-to-one ratios. I went through this. I couldn't have done it. I couldn't have gotten safe training without a two-to-one ratio." He said, "Why does government think?"—

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Minister. Speaker, as the minister has indicated, the skilled trades are a key contributor to Ontario's economic prosperity. The economic success of the province depends in large part on the support we provide to our skilled tradespeople. We need to ensure that every Ontarian who wants to pursue a skilled trade has the opportunity to do so. That's why the College of Trades is a great organization which helps to raise the profile of the skilled trades sector.

The establishment of the College of Trades has been an important step that has put the skilled trades in the spotlight of Ontario's core economic strategy. Constituents in my riding have impressed upon me the importance of reviewing the apprenticeship ratios in Ontario.

Minister, can you tell us when the College of Trades will start reviewing apprenticeship ratios?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The College of Trades, which only started operating barely two months ago, has already announced that the first set of ratios will be reviewed beginning in April, Mr. Speaker, just over a month from now.

Our government is proud that for the first time in Ontario history, the trades themselves will now be able to regulate and govern themselves, rather than government doing it.

Mr. Speaker, my friend from Sault Ste. Marie knows, because we've talked about this, that I've challenged the opposition to produce the math on where these mystical 200,000 jobs are, since they could never produce more than 60,000 apprenticeships. We're already at 120,000.

So I'd like to invite them to rooms 228 and 230 at 4 p.m. this afternoon, where the College of Trades, business and labour leaders and educators will be from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to answer questions from the opposition and government, so they can get their facts straight.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question also is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, as you know, you and the College of Trades are having a partisan reception here today. They're also asking you for \$31 million to fund them next year, a 500% increase.

My understanding is that travel and accommodation are being paid for by the College of Trades to attend this partisan event, which will amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

This is a completely government-funded organization, funded by the taxpayers of this province. Minister, you and your government brought in tough new rules which prohibit government-funded agencies from lobbying the government.

Minister, can you tell the House today who is paying for this event? And is one cent coming from your ministry or the taxpayers of Ontario, or is this another Working Families Coalition exemption?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I shouldn't have stayed home and watched Saturday Night Live; it's not as entertaining.

Ron Johnson, I think, sat in your caucus. I think he's a manager and a former Progressive Conservative member from Brant, Mr. Speaker, which you'd be familiar with. I think that almost half of these folks are business leaders.

Now, not only is your math wrong on that, but could my critic explain where the 200,000 jobs are? Because I've talked to most business leaders and most labour leaders and they can't get to the same numbers you do. They can tell me that when you were in government, you couldn't deliver 50%.

This very low-cost College of Trades event, which is non-partisan, is open. I would suggest, on behalf of all the hard-working students taking apprenticeships, that the member opposite show them respect and show up at the reception and learn a few things.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Maybe you'll take time out of the reception and come down and answer a late-show question, because you didn't answer that one.

Minister, I ask again: Tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars are going to a partisan reception to supply you with booze, canapés and fancy cheeses. The event is occurring here today at 6 p.m. in room 228, where you and your PA are speaking. The official opposition were not invited to speak at this partisan event.

The Ontario College of Trades is seeking a 500% increase in their budget. Is a fancy, taxpayer-funded reception all it takes to get your government's attention a month before the budget? Is that all it takes?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in the most platonic sense of the word, I would invite the honourable member to be my date at the reception tonight. Every single member of the House is welcome. I am afraid it's much more a tap water than a champagne event.

Mr. Speaker, their math is so bad on this. Now I know how they get the fiction of 200,000. We're at 150,000 right now; our goal is 365,000.

We know that this government has led an economic renewal that has created greater demand for apprenticeships than ever before.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A little humility from the member opposite, who couldn't even produce half the number of apprenticeships that we have produced—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—rather than all this hubris—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. A second reminder for all members: When I say "Question" or "Answer," only a few seconds to wrap up, please, as a reminder.

New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In 2007, the Premier promised a new long-term-care facility at Windsor's long-abandoned Grace hospital site.

Four years later, no beds were built and the site remained derelict.

1120

Then, in the 2011 election and that campaign, the Premier promised \$2 million to clean up the site, saying that work would begin shortly and calling it a “guarantee.”

Can the Premier please provide an update on this work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It’s quite appropriate that there be a question, because the Ontario Long Term Care Association is here today, and I welcome this question on this day. I’m very pleased, Speaker, to be able to say to this House that progress is being made on the new long-term-care home in Windsor. As I understand it, those proposals, those tenders, are out now, and construction is slated to begin as soon as possible. These are important beds in Windsor. They do have a significant ALC challenge; we’re aware of that. Unfortunately, the old site simply did not work out as originally had been hoped, but we are looking forward to a new home in very short order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I am asking specifically the question about the old site; perhaps the minister didn’t hear that part of the question. The fact is that no money has flowed from the province and the site remains derelict.

After years of dithering and mismanagement of this file by the province, the Premier is now threatening to walk away and leave the city of Windsor to deal with this mess on their own. Can the Premier and the Minister of Health ensure that the funding that they promised voters during the election campaign in October remains available to Windsor after March 31 so that this eyesore on that former site of Grace hospital can be fixed once and for all for the people of Windsor?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer to the question is yes. The commitment that was made remains a commitment to the people of Windsor. It does appear that there are asbestos issues, perhaps, at that site, but the commitment was made and the commitment will be honoured, Speaker.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, as you know, Ontario wildlife, from bears to coyotes, can be so abundant that they prey upon and damage agricultural livestock, poultry and crops. Farmers recognize that wildlife damage is an inherent risk which they accept as part of being a farmer. It’s when the damage rises to intolerable levels that they turn to government for help.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please inform the House what steps have been taken to ensure that farmers are adequately compensated for their losses to wildlife damage?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: This Ontario government understands full well that wildlife damage is a serious concern to our farmers. So, working with farmers and through the Agricultural-Wildlife Conflict Working Group, we developed a program that better responds to these concerns. It came into effect July 1, 2011. This new program expands both the variety of wildlife species included and the types of livestock that can be compensated.

In two years, we plan to review this program. If changes need to be made to make it better, we’ll make those changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister. I know that farmers across rural Ontario will be pleased that the government has implemented a modern, effective compensation program. Farmers know that wildlife damage negatively affects farm incomes, and there is a concern that Ontario keep the rates in line with current livestock and poultry values. They want to see the compensation schedule kept current and have adequate compensation paid to farmers for livestock losses.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with the House what, if any, steps were taken on revising the compensation schedule?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. We’re very, very proud of this initiative that was developed, with the help of farmers, through our government’s Open for Business program. That’s the way policy should be developed. We listened to producers, who said that the program’s compensation schedule needed updating. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? We updated the schedule, offering 100% compensation for the value of livestock and bee losses. Simply put, the Ontario wildlife damage compensation program gets the job done for our Ontario farmers, and we’re proud of that.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Today marks six years of the McGuinty government tolerating the illegal occupation of a subdivision in Caledonia—six years of chaos, intimidation and home invasion.

Last week, out of the blue, you proposed in this House to get all parties to discuss potential uses for Douglas Creek Estates. The reaction I got from people was, “What?” and, “Why would you consider this?” Further questions: Who will be at the table? Where will they meet? When will this happen? How much will it cost?

Minister, will you please enlighten us? What is going on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is the contention of our government that it’s very important that where there is a conflict that has festered, that has been latent, that has not been dealt with, then it is better to bring people to the table to speak about that, to try to resolve it and to move forward.

I think that it is incumbent on all MPPs—if there ever were an issue that was not partisan, it's issues to do with our First Nations people: land claims issues, social issues and issues of community cohesion. So it seems to me that it is incumbent on every member of this House to do everything we can to bring people together to resolve conflicts.

I can't tell the member opposite dates and places and times, because we don't have agreement from everyone. But I'm working with the mayors, I'm working with the First Nations; I'm working to bring people together to have that conversation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just to follow up on land claims issues, when you announced discussing potential uses for DCE you stated, "It's important to remember that at the heart of the matter is a 200-year-old land claim."

Minister, there's no land claim. There are a number of valid land claims along the Haldimand tract area but not on Douglas Creek Estates.

Chief federal negotiator Ron Doering noted in November 2007 that "in this particular case, Douglas Creek is not a valid claim ... I've consistently said that Douglas Creek Estates is not a valid claim."

A year later, Doering wrote a letter: "It is Canada's view that in December 1844 Six Nations surrendered the Hamilton and Port Dover Plank Road lands."

Minister, I ask again, why are you meeting to discuss future joint uses for an illegally occupied subdivision that, according to the federal negotiator, is not a valid land claim?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the member opposite is wrong on all counts. First of all, I am meeting to try to bring people together. I am trying to play a facilitative role because I think that we need to move this issue forward.

If there's anyone that I'm not going to have a conversation about a land claim with, it's the member opposite. The federal government needs to be at the table. Land claims are at the heart of this issue. What I believe is that in order for this community to heal from the rifts that have been created, in part by the member opposite, we need to bring people—

Interjections.

Interjection: You have to relax.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, she has to speak loudly to be heard over Lisa MacLeod.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: When in doubt, raise your voice.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to speak quietly. I'm happy to tread softly.

What we need is, we need people to come together, and most of all we need the federal government to be part of this conversation. We can talk with the First Nations, we can talk with the mayors, but we absolutely need the federal government to take part in this. The fact that they are denying that they have a role, that they are stepping

back, is a real problem. Although I think the member, your federal counterpart, is saying that there does need to be a—

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

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, in their election platform, the Liberals promised to create a new fund—a new, permanent fund—for municipal roads, bridges, to help communities and municipalities with their infrastructure deficit.

Yesterday, the government flip-flopped and cancelled the fund. Can the Premier tell municipal leaders, many of them who are here today, how he expects cash-strapped municipalities to keep their aging roads, their highways and their hundreds and hundreds of bridges in good repair without this badly needed support?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question, and I know that Minister Chiarelli is, as we speak, meeting with delegations at the Good Roads and ROMA conference.

Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear, and over the last eight years we have made record investments in infrastructure across the province, including roads in the north and in the south, and we will continue to do that.

What we are working on right now, Mr. Speaker—and we have had many conversations with municipalities—is an asset management project, and the municipalities know that in order to be able to make the investments that we need, we have to make sure that we have the asset management process in place. We need to know where the bridges are that are of concern; we need to know what the other infrastructure issues are.

We're working with municipalities, we've invested in the municipal database and we will continue to do that—

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Investments in infrastructure are one of the best ways to create jobs and to spark economic growth. We heard from the people at ROMA yesterday; they know where their bridges are. Some of the municipalities had 35 bridges in a municipality with 500 people.

Businesses, farmers and families rely on Ontario roads every day. Municipalities need long, predictable funding, as you promised in your election campaign, to address their roads and their highway repairs. They need it in an efficient and cost-effective way. Can the Premier explain to municipal leaders why their government is abandoning its permanent roads and bridges fund—and when municipalities and Ontarians need it most?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So here's what we're going to follow through with. We're going to continue uploading the services that we committed to: \$3 billion

worth of services, Mr. Speaker, that were downloaded on to municipalities that we are continuing to upload.

And what we have said—and the Premier said it yesterday in his remarks—is that at this time, at this moment, we're not able to go ahead with that fund. That in no way means that we will not continue to invest in municipalities, and in fact, as I said, that \$3-billion upload, that is the biggest benefit that we could put on to municipalities.

So we'll continue to work with them. We understand absolutely how important infrastructure is, which is why we have put four times more per capita into infrastructure spending than the previous government did. We're going to continue to upload those—

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

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, people in my riding are excited about the 2015 Pan Am Games coming to Ontario. The games will attract thousands of tourists, help promote physical activity and focus international attention on all that our province has to offer. It will also stimulate millions of dollars of investment in supporting facilities, transportation, infrastructure and Ontario communities. For instance, the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus is benefiting from these investments with its new aquatic centre, which is scheduled to be complete in 2014.

Recently, Minister, you announced that construction was beginning on the revitalized West Don Lands, which will host the athletes' village. Minister, can you please tell the House what the project involves and how it will serve the games?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for the question. Earlier this year I was very pleased to announce the beginning of the construction of the Pan/Parapan American Games athletes' village, the first and the largest construction project of the games.

By winning the 2015 games, we've been able to accelerate the pace of redevelopment of the waterfront community in the West Don Lands. The milestone project will bring new jobs: more than 5,200 direct and indirect jobs, including 700 construction jobs on that site. This project will build a new waterfront community that will be the temporary home for more than 10,000 athletes, coaches and officials during the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. The village will be a great place from which athletes and their families can experience Ontario's many world-class cultural and tourism attractions and experiences.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his

question given by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities concerning the cost of a reception. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There being no further deferred votes, this house stands adjourned until this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: On behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, they may not have arrived yet, but I'd like to introduce some guests in the members' east gallery from the Ontario Long Term Care Association: Chris McKey, Sandy Lomaszewycz, David Cutler, Patrick McCarthy, Lois Cormack, who is chair of the OLTC board, Daniel Kaniuk, Brock Hall, Shirley Thomas-Weir and Sheri Annable. I remind all members that they're having a reception this evening in the dining room.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise on behalf of myself and the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, who is at the far end on this side. I'm looking up and I'm sure these are my students from Pine Ridge Secondary School in Pickering, who I'm going to speak about in a moment.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I want to address the comments that were made by the Premier yesterday when he blamed the decline of Ontario's manufacturing sector on the success of the Alberta oil sands. Instead of looking in the mirror and accepting fault, our Premier has stayed busy by pointing the finger at Europe, then at the United States, then at the federal government, and now, shamefully, at the province of Alberta.

Make no mistake: The Premier has only his own failed and tired policies to blame for the mess that Ontario is currently facing. Under the McGuinty government, Ontario became a have-not province for the first time in our history. Under this Premier's watch, 600,000 Ontario men and women have lost their jobs, and under this Premier's watch, we are staring directly at a debt approaching \$411 billion in 2017.

Instead of looking for a scapegoat, the Premier should realize it is his own government's policies and mismanagement which have dug Ontario into a hole, policies like the Premier's expensive green energy experiment and mismanagement like the scandal at Ornge.

Instead of the blame game, Ontarians are looking for a government that can lead, that can make tough decisions and can help turn our economy around. Unfortunately, this government has run out of ideas and has chosen to blame Alberta's booming economy for its many failures.

DOUG RAPELJE

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today, I rise to recognize a well-known gentleman in Niagara and Welland riding who has dedicated over 55 years to various organizations and groups to help and improve senior services, and to congratulate him on being named a recipient of the 2011 Ontario Senior Achievement Award late last year.

Doug Rapelje, who is 78 years old and a resident of Welland, has spent his lifetime working and volunteering in various capacities in the battle of making things a lot better for our growing elderly population, whether in nursing homes or in the community.

He recalls beginning his commitment to seniors in the 1950s when he was working with the city of Welland and involved in an investigation of Sunset Haven retirement home. He witnessed what he could only term a “jail cell” at that time, with eight people to a room, and men and women segregated. He told the local Welland Tribune, “The whole thing was unbelievable.” Doug became administrator of Sunset shortly after the investigation, and later director.

When the Niagara region was created in 1970, he became the administrator for senior citizens, a position he held for 25 years. As a matter of fact, in recognition of his years of service, the regional municipality named a new home for the aged in his honour.

He has constantly come to the plate, serving on numerous boards and committees, including the United Way, Alzheimer Society of Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada, the Niagara District Health Council, and the housing committee for the physically disabled.

ANTI-BULLYING CAMPAIGN

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise today to introduce a young, compassionate and energetic school group from my riding of Ajax–Pickering. Motivated by the tragic suicide of Pickering student Mitchell Wilson last September, students from Pine Ridge Secondary School in Pickering reacted by building a campaign of hope for victims of bullying.

I had the pleasure of donating for T-shirts for our Premier and our Minister of Education—Premier McGuinty and Minister Broten—and myself when I met with the students. I also met with a couple of their teachers, particularly their principal, Debbie Johnson, and teachers Mr. Leung and Ms. Trentadue, and particularly four students I met with that particular day, and they were Cody, Brian, Sarah and a second Sarah. So it was a great day.

These students have named their campaign “i AM WHO i AM.” I had the honour of meeting with, as I said, a number of them. By saying, “I am who I am,” they are encouraging the acceptance and dignity of fellow students.

The “i AM WHO i AM” campaign has gained momentum. Thanks to their efforts and the support of the communities of Ajax and Pickering, they recently

reached a phenomenal \$19,000, and that number is still growing. These funds will go directly to six Durham region families dealing with the challenges of muscular dystrophy.

Mr. Speaker, I also have with the students today Chris Braney, the trustee for the area and vice-chair for the Durham board, as well as school officials. I’m truly pleased and I would like to say to you—

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

ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to increase awareness for class 14 of the advanced agricultural leadership program, which is coordinated by the Rural Ontario Institute.

For those of you unfamiliar with AALP, as it’s known by its acronym, it is a 19-month executive development and personal development program for men and women in Ontario’s agriculture and food industry.

Since 1984, AALP has been one of those few opportunities where individuals from across the agriculture, agri-food and rural sectors can come together and discuss issues impacting their industries. They also regularly engage with business, community and political leaders.

Graduates of AALP will use their skills and knowledge to lead changes and growth within the agricultural and rural sectors. These are sectors that already provide 164,000 jobs and represent 13% of our provincial GDP.

RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Last week, I was pleased to celebrate the opening of the Market Square ice rink and water feature at Guelph city hall. This infrastructure project is part of the revitalization of Guelph’s downtown core and is the central feature of the new public space in front of city hall. It consists of an ice rink in the winter and converts into an animated water feature in the summer. Market Square has quickly become a focal point for family recreation and community events in Guelph.

This is one of 750 projects in Ontario that have moved forward thanks to a joint federal-provincial investment of \$380 million in recreation infrastructure. The federal and provincial governments each contributed \$500,000 to Market Square.

My riding has also benefited from several other federal-provincial investments to improve community recreational infrastructure, including a new video scoreboard at the Sleeman Centre; upgrades at the West End Community Centre; repairs and energy conservation at the Evergreen seniors’ centre, which is celebrating 20 years this year; and new washrooms at Guelph Lake Conservation Area. A total investment of \$4.82 million in Guelph—a win for Guelph families and a win for Guelph’s economy.

1510

RON SCHLEGEL

Mr. Michael Harris: I rise today to talk about a member of the Kitchener–Conestoga business community who, through his leadership, has inspired others to make Waterloo region one of the best places in Ontario to do business. This year, Ron Schlegel was named the fourth recipient of Waterloo region's Barnraiser Award for his philanthropy and commitment to community. He also was awarded a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal earlier this month by Governor General David Johnston, again for his tremendous work in the region of Waterloo.

For Ron, success starts with a view that money should not be seen as an objective or a goal, but as a resource to benefit the community. Ron has applied this business philosophy to his job as a land developer and retirement home care provider to build neighbourhoods that promote social interaction, improve the quality of life for residents and strengthen the sense of community.

But Ron's impressive accomplishments began much earlier in his career as an academic. During his time as a professor of applied health sciences, Ron established the health studies and gerontology department at the University of Waterloo and developed both the master's and Ph.D. programs for these academic fields. Ron's passion for health care then led him to found the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging in 2005 and co-found both the Centre for Applied Health Research and the Murray Alzheimer Research Education Program.

It is the work of people like Ron that makes me proud to represent the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise today to discuss a growing problem across Ontario. This problem is spreading across Ontario; the malaise is growing. The alarm was sounded in Bramalea–Gore–Malton and it continues in ridings like Brampton–Springdale, Brampton West and York South–Weston. It was the number one issue on the lips of constituents this past election in my riding. This issue is auto insurance.

Auto insurance is skyrocketing across this province. We are paying the highest rates in Ontario. Constituents have been coming to my office in droves, talking about their concerns. In fact, just last month, Andrew came to my office and told me that, after five years of having an absolutely clean driving record, one no-fault accident and a second at-fault accident, he was dropped from coverage completely. This is simply unacceptable.

I've received emails; I've received letters. Constituents have been coming by, complaining about this issue. In fact, the fact that we have now had recent legislation which has cut our auto insurance benefits in half—yet we have seen our own insurance premiums go up instead of going down.

Ontarians have even further seen the fact that just by living in one part of the city, their rates are almost double what they are in other parts of the city—

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

HEART MONTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: February is Heart Month. The Heart and Stroke Foundation's national campaign encourages Canadians to rally together to raise awareness and funds for the foundation.

We know that heart disease and stroke takes one in three Canadians before their time and is the number one killer of women, taking more women than all cancers combined. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation's report card for November 2011, "Eight out of 10 Canadians know that heart disease and stroke can be prevented ... or treated by making healthy ... choices but they are focusing on the barriers rather than the opportunities" to achieve better health.

Through the generosity and compassion of volunteers, the Heart and Stroke Foundation is able to apply life-saving knowledge, education and advocacy that generate real results. To date, initiatives like Heart Month volunteers have helped to fund:

- research that has resulted in the use of a clog-busting drug that reverses the effects of stroke;
- in-utero and neonatal heart research that saves babies' lives;
- research that helps Canadians eat healthier and live longer.

So, thank you to the Heart and Stroke Foundation and all of their volunteers and donors for the vital work you do for Ontarians and all of Canada. Your work is vital and saves lives every day.

AUTOMOTIVE CENTRE
OF EXCELLENCE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Creating severe weather is no longer exclusively in the hands of Mother Nature. At the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, located in my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, it's now possible to create an arctic blizzard, scorching desert heat or a driving rain at the flip of a switch. This unique weather machine is now part of the new Automotive Centre of Excellence, or ACE for short.

ACE is the first testing and research centre of its kind in Canada and, in many respects, the world. It was officially opened this past summer, and will be a magnet for business in Durham region, the GTA and throughout Ontario.

ACE offers a full range of test chambers, including one of the largest and most sophisticated climatic wind tunnels on the planet. In this chamber, they can create wind speeds in excess of 240 kilometres per hour, temperatures ranging from minus 40 degrees Celsius to plus 60 degrees, relative humidity ranging from 5% to 95% and, using what's called a "reconfigurable solar

array,” they can replicate the effects of the sun. The chamber is also hydrogen capable, allowing for advanced fuel cell development.

ACE is where the next generation of electric vehicles, new technology and products we haven’t even thought of yet will be developed, tested and validated.

ACE could also be used to train military personnel, rescue crews or competitive athletes. It has the potential to assist the movie industry or test anything that is subject to severe wind, humidity, snow, icing or desert heat.

Mr. Speaker, at ACE they are creating the perfect storm in the name of innovation.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs concerning the proposal for discussions on the Douglas Creek Estates subdivision. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MASTER’S COLLEGE AND SEMINARY ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2012

Mr. Leal moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Master’s College and Seminary.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great number of residents from Oxford county, and it is 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.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition. I affix my signature to it, as I agree with it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: “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 the petition and will be signing it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario government” is making PET scans “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’s “regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

They “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 Sophia to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'm pleased to rise today to table my first petition. If I may say, it is a noteworthy one, representing the initiative of an 11-year-old boy in my riding, Mr. Trevor Bruinix. Trevor has taken the proper steps in our democracy to collect 186 names of people who agree with an appeal that is short but very important.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we would like to stop the closure of Ontario Place;

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

"Stop the closure of Ontario Place."

I agree with Trevor. I've been there myself numerous times, and I'm pleased to affix my signature to the petition.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from one of the great radio voices from Peterborough, Pete Dalliday, 1284 Hopewell Ave. I know the family well.

Interjection: The other great voice.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, there's two great voices in Peterborough.

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 and give it to page Jason.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This petition comes courtesy of Focus in Elmvale, a petition to restore medical labs Tottenham, Stayner and Elmvale and reduce lineups throughout Simcoe-Grey.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services"—and, by the way, Mr. Speaker, the government isn't saving money: They have a hard cap on these labs; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the" McGuinty "government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care" dollars: "doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars," such as at eHealth, "collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax" alone, "ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

"That the McGuinty government stops the erosion of public health care services and ensure timely and equal access to medical laboratories" in all of Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

"Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education's own occupancy formula;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

"Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014."

I support this petition and send it forward with Michael.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Michael Harris: "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 will hand this to Kriti to take to the table.

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: A petition to protect the use of live baitfish in Ontario.

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize and work with the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable, quality baitfish product for the anglers of Ontario.”

I support this petition, I will affix my name to it and send it down with Ryan R.

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from York—no—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I’ve moved west.

“Protect Your Rights”—petition to protect the use of live baitfish in Ontario.

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize and work with the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable, quality baitfish product for the anglers of Ontario.”

I’m happy the Minister of the Environment is supportive over there, and I’ll hand this to page James.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas 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 comply with regulations based on science and local planning.”

1530

I support this petition and send it down with Darren.

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: From Jacob’s Bait and Tackle—again, “Protect Your Rights”—petition to protect the use of live baitfish in Ontario.

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize and work with the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable, quality baitfish product for the anglers of Ontario.”

And I’ll hand this to page Grace G.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jim Wilson: “A petition to restore local control:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas Tim Hudak, Jim Wilson and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

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

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

I agree with that petition and I will sign it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: This is calling for a moratorium on industrial wind as well.

“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, will sign it, and send it to the table with page Jason.

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think we’ll just about get this under the time, Speaker.

“Protect the use of live baitfish in Ontario:

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize and work with the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable, quality baitfish product for the anglers of Ontario.”

I support this petition, I affix my name to it and I’ll send it down with Adrian.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT
AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2012LOI DE 2012 VISANT
À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS
ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 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): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Oh, and thank you all. It’s a pleasure to rise today and add my comments on Bill 11, Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2012—or, as I like to think of it, the “spend and hope for the best in economic development, McGuinty-style” act. But that’s basically what it is—and here we go again.

I was doing counting as we were sitting and listening to petitions, and I thought to myself: We met for 12 days in December; we met for three days last week—that’s 15; and this is our second day this week. That’s 17 days that we’ve met since the last House rose last June. That’s not an awful lot of time to be spent in this chamber debating the business of the Ontario people.

What it’s come to is this: We’re back in the business of spending on economic development—or, as I like to think of it, corporate welfare. This is not the way to stimulate Ontario and it’s not any coincidence that Ontario finds itself, at this point, in the position that it is in, from an economic perspective. This is the same old Liberal government; this is not a new Liberal government. It doesn’t matter what the numbers are. It’s doing the same thing, and the definition of insanity, according to Mr. Einstein, is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result, so here we are.

This is about pulling the wool over the eyes of Ontarians, particularly southwestern Ontarians, only to increase our spending in the province of Ontario by about \$160 million.

Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act: It sounds like a great idea. And this is something that I’ve said in debate many times in this Legislature: They title bills so amazingly that you think there’s going to be a miracle once it’s passed. But the fact is, it puts Ontario at greater risk of further financial difficulties, and this is what worries my party. This is what worries Ontarians in general. It’s very much what worries the 600,000 or so people who have no job in the province of Ontario right now, and that has put Ontario in the unenviable position of 61 solid months—I guess it’s going to be 62 in the next week or so—of being the laggard of Confederation, the last of all of the provinces and territories, in terms of the percentage of unemployment that we have right here in our province.

From everything I’ve heard from businesses—and I’ve talked to a lot of businesses around the province—and from my constituents, it cannot be business as usual with this Liberal government at the helm. You know, I recently spoke to a number of business people, and I can’t refer to them by name for obvious reasons, but I’m thinking of one that happens to have a grant of some substance from the province of Ontario under an economic development initiative. I said to the gentleman

in question, “If you had not been offered this grant”—because the grant was offered—“would you still be doing what you’re doing in the province of Ontario?” And he says, “Of course I would. It’s not dependent on the grant.” And then somebody else in the room said, “And if you hadn’t purchased the company that you’re operating, would you locate in Ontario?” The answer was, “Are you out of your”—and I’ll leave the other word out—“mind?”

This is not because this person doesn’t like Ontario. This is an Ontarian. This is a person who is making a comment from strictly a business perspective on what Ontario represents to him and to his company in the overall scheme of things, and they operate companies, or at least branches of the same company, in a number of different locations. So I’m not making this up as I go along: I’m talking from the experience of discussing this with business people, with constituents, who are very worried. They’re worried about the kind of money that’s being spent, the largesse of the government opposite in terms of how they spread the money around and what it is they actually intend to achieve with it.

Our party, as is well known, is about creating the conditions where people can succeed; where businesses can succeed because the conditions are right for that to happen. That party is about throwing money around so that when I or one of my colleagues gets up in this Legislature to ask a question of that government, the answer is always a spending answer—and anybody who’s watching and listening and observes the machinations of this Legislature knows that’s true: “We spent this much money, and that’s why it’s a good thing.”

Well, folks, if you are watching on television, understand something: There is no such thing as government money. It doesn’t exist. This is the people’s money, and the people on that side of this chamber are responsible for the way it’s administered and the way it’s spent. And I’ve got to say, after these scant few days, numbering in the teens, in this Legislature, the act may have changed but the play is the same.

So it’s time that the party opposite, the government of the day, just stops saying that they’re looking for input and actually begins to listen to the straightforward ideas being put forward, and I refer in this particular instance to the straightforward ideas of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. You talk about a partnership? Listen to your partners.

The party opposite constantly talks about these great successes that they have made in attracting business and attracting investment into Ontario: “creating a sound economic environment in this province.” A sound economic environment in this province? We’ve just heard from an independent economist, your economist—because the Liberals hired this economist. We have been unwitting participants in the charade that is the Drummond report. And what he said is that we’re right on course for a \$30-billion deficit within the next five fiscal years. That’s on a business-as-usual basis, and all we’ve seen so far is business as usual, so I guess we’re heading for a \$30-billion deficit.

1540

If you add up what’s going to be scored in deficits between now and then, we’re looking at a total provincial debt north of \$400 billion. Now, let’s just flesh that out a little bit for people who are observing at home and who don’t necessarily work with words like “deficit” and “debt” and “interest” every single day of their lives. The deficit is what we’re short by this year. So we’re short by \$16 billion. Why? Because the government of the day has chosen to spend in excess to the point where we are \$16 billion short. If you add up all of the deficits scored each year by successive governments since Confederation, and we keep going on a business-as-usual basis, as this government seems bent on doing, we get to a figure called the provincial debt of I think it’s \$411 billion, if Mr. Drummond is projecting accurately, by 2017-18. What does that really mean? To the average person at home, it’s just numbers that politicians talk about. The folks at home just want to know that their services are going to be there, that their entitlements are going to be there when they need them and when they want them.

But the fact of the matter is, if you keep going on this course and you want to see what the result is when you don’t respond to the economic pressures of the day, all you have to do is turn on the nightly news and take a look at what’s going on in Greece, because that’s the ultimate. Now, I’m not suggesting that we in Ontario are going to become Greece next year, but if you don’t take action now, that is where you’re going. That is the track you’re on. That is the fear that we have. And it doesn’t just affect us; in fact, it affects another generation even more than it affects us. It affects our children, it affects our grandchildren, it affects future generations, and we have to get off this particular treadmill.

So the whole idea that what we’re looking at is a sound economic environment in this province as a result of bills like this one is laughable. Since 2003, Ontario has seen time and again a spend policy being put forward by this Liberal government. This is what businesses warned us about. This is what other countries have experienced. This is what economist Don Drummond, the Premier’s hand-picked economist, has said, and he has been very specific.

You cannot continue to spend at the rate you have been spending. So he says that. I don’t say it—well, I do, but I’m not the economist that the government hired. The province is in serious financial deficit, to the tune of more than \$16 billion. Again, he said it and the figures say it; I don’t have to say it. Also, if the Premier and the Minister of Finance do not follow through with what their hand-picked economist has suggested, then we could be facing a \$30-billion deficit.

Since 2007, the McGuinty government has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. They’ll play the figures with you, but the fact of the matter is, if you’re in the business that we are in here, we look at these numbers because these numbers are indicators for what the province is doing or, in this case, not doing. These numbers are indicators of the changing face of Ontario, the

changing face of administrations around the world as we shift from one type of economy to another type of economy.

You could say that there was some predictability about the fact that we would move away from such a rich manufacturing climate over time. However, if this was predictable, what you would have wanted to do is address it before it happened, and this was a grasshopper-and-anant story; it's a Nero-fiddling-while-Rome-burns story. But the fact of the matter is, here we are, and since 2007 the McGuinty government has indeed lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, decimating the entire manufacturing industry in this province, with little to no hope of recovery. We will not see that kind of business in the province of Ontario again.

So the question becomes, what will we see and how will we, as people who work in government or opposition, but generally public life and public administration, address this massive change? What we're discussing today is a bill that purports to be a part of that solution, Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. It doesn't make it so. Because you say you're going to attract investment and create jobs doesn't make it so. This is a policy that this government, for the past eight and a half years, has been overseeing. They've been on an economic development trend that involves this type of corporate welfare, and we wind up north of 8% unemployed, we wind up with a manufacturing industry in decline, and we wind up at the tail end of Confederation in a province that has 40% of the population of Canada. Why? These kinds of policies.

Is it any wonder that thinking people around the province who are actively engaged with the way the economy operates and is it any wonder that our side, the Progressive Conservative opposition in the province of Ontario, say, "You know, there has got to be a better way. You've got to find a way to stimulate an economy and make individuals and corporations want to invest or want to stay in Ontario. You've got to be able to do that by creating the conditions that make them want to stay"?

I might say at this point that there were questions in question period this morning that had to do with whether or not the Premier would stay the course on continuing to reduce corporate income tax, which is obviously an incentive for corporations to locate or remain in Ontario. He's evasive, and I'll take that to be a no. So we're going to put the brakes on bringing the corporate tax rates down, which represents a massive flip-flop on the part of the government. It inherited low corporate tax rates, bounced them up, and now says, "Oh, we did wrong," brought them down as recently as November and said we're going to stay the course. Now here it is February and we're not going to do that. I'm not sure that this government has any kind of an economic compass at all.

As my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex noted, at one point in this Premier's tenure we were losing 100 jobs per hour—100 jobs per hour. That's the kind of statistic that blows your mind and makes your head explode. It's kind of like that other statistic we like

to cite because it's true and it's terrifying, and that is that this government takes in a million dollars less per hour than it actually spends. So what we're doing is we're engaging in an exercise of unbridled spending, of which this bill is a part, we're not creating jobs as a result of it, which is the supposed end game, and we are losing 100 jobs per hour. How does that sit with good government? That is a shameful thing. It's shameful that this government has basically sat on its hands for more than eight years while the manufacturing sector of this province, once the largest single sector, is now not even a shadow of what it once was.

With all the government's posturing that they have been helping more and more Ontarians, we still have, as I mentioned before, approximately 600,000 people who are not working. We're not talking about people who don't want to work; we're not talking about people who are sitting on the dole because they want to be; we're not talking about people who like sitting home and watching old television programs. We are talking about people who, if it were available to them, would be out working right now. So it's not for lack of wanting to work or a lack of motivation on their part. Companies at this point—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mike Harris used to say that.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Companies, I say to the member from St. Catharines, simply do not want to locate in Ontario. Surely you want more business in St. Catharines. I have a good member from Simcoe-Grey who sits a couple of seats to my right here in the Legislature; he wants more business in his riding and sees this kind of policy as an impediment to that. I think everybody here wants to see more businesses operating in their ridings and wants to see every one of those 600,000 people have a job. And yet what we're doing is applying little Band-Aids we think are going to do something.

I'm seeing an article being held up in my face by the member from St. Catharines. It says something about a bright future. So you have one new company there. How many have you lost? That's the question that I would ask you. In any case, I digress.

Companies don't want to locate in Ontario. If they did, there wouldn't be over 8% unemployment, there wouldn't be a track, on which we have now embarked, towards a \$30-billion deficit, and there wouldn't be a government that thinks that its largesse is the lynchpin to creating jobs and stimulating the economy here in the province of Ontario.

We have become, basically, the investment toxic wasteland of Canada. How things have changed: from being the most prosperous to now receiving a large share of our budget through federal-provincial transfers and, yes, talking to Alberta as if it's doing something wrong by extracting the resources from its ground and somehow injuring Ontario, when Ontario was in the sun 20, 30, 50 years ago, all that time since Confederation, and this government almost singlehandedly has brought it down. And you want to blame it on others? Shame. This bill is about nothing more than tossing money at a problem and sweeping it under the rug.

1550

This past throne speech, this Premier promised over \$2.5 billion in additional spending—can you imagine, in a climate like this, \$2.5 billion in additional spending? Already, 19.2% of GDP is spent on the provincial debt. Do you know the statistic on provincial debt? We pay interest on that debt, and if there was a ministry of interest, it would be the third largest ministry in the province of Ontario. The Ministry of Health spends the most of our tax dollars, followed by the Ministry of Education—as it should be—and vying for second, and now in third, is the ministry of interest. Well, there is no ministry of interest. But you know what? It's going to be third if we keep going on this track.

How does this Premier plan on finding that additional \$2.5 billion? The province simply cannot afford to continue on this spending spree.

Earlier this month, another 500 Ontarians lost their jobs with the closing of the Caterpillar plant in London, Ontario. Companies are cutting their losses. They're jumping from the sinking Ontario ship, and it gives me no joy to say that.

I'm a proud Ontarian. I raised my family here. I worked in corporate Ontario, and if I weren't here that's what I'd be doing again. And the bottom line is, maybe I wouldn't have as much opportunity, and for certain my children and my children's children will not have that much opportunity.

But not all is entirely gloomy. We have a chance to turn things around. The Liberals have to take the report that they commissioned and they have to listen to what was recommended. If that report were heeded, then we could find a balanced budget in 2017-18.

I might say that our advice to this government on their report was—you had 362 recommendations. No, we don't expect them all adopted; we expect the advice to be followed. The advice from Mr. Drummond was, "Here are 362 recommendations that, taken in concert, will result in you getting off this track and balancing the budget by 2017-18."

But we know you're not going to take all 362 recommendations, so when you take one off the table, you have to put something else on the table that keeps you on that financial track. That's what we said. It's what we continue to say. It's not our report; it's your report. Get off your duffs and do it.

If this report is heeded, as I said, we can get to balance by 2017-18. However, as usual, this is a Premier who believes that he knows best. Speaker, Ontario is crying out for a change—change from the way business has been traditionally done in this province, change in the stale ways that the Liberal government has gone about attracting business.

I say we start investing in Ontario. I say that we put an end to the spending spree that the party opposite thinks is just fine. I say that it's about time that the McGuinty government stop using hard-earned taxpayer dollars to manage the crisis that they have, in their infinite wisdom, created. Our tax dollars are there to help Ontarians out,

not bail out a failing government policy, and that is exactly what we will get if we allow Bill 11 to pass.

This is a stopgap measure that accomplishes nothing except wasting more money. Remember, we're facing a debt level of \$411 billion within five years. Bill 11 may only add another \$2.5 billion, but it's another \$2.5 billion that, Speaker, I would consider to be yet another nail in the coffin of industrial Ontario, and this has got to stop now. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is always a pleasure to listen to my colleague and friend from Thornhill. Although we come from different political perspectives, he is a man who takes his finance and his budgetry very seriously. And when you listen to him, he speaks, I think, the economic sense of the Right. He is castigating this government for their failures. He is talking about where they have gone wrong. He puts the blame quite clearly, in my view, where it belongs: on this government and their lack of action and appropriate action over the past eight years.

Where I disagree with him is that he has solutions which would only compound, in many ways, the difficulties that Ontarians have found themselves in in these past eight years. It seems to me quite clear that to anybody who is looking at the haves and the have-nots of this province, there are many people who are doing very well under this government and their tax patterns. There are very many businesses that are able to survive quite well, given all of the grants and the largesse and the things that this government seems intent upon doing.

The problem is—and he and I come from different perspectives—that the government seems to be trapped in their own ideology—or their own lack of ideology, if one attributes that to Liberals. They are trapped very much by their failures, and they continue to carry them out. I know where he comes from—I will have a different perspective in a moment—but I commend him, as always, for putting forward forcefully his own ideas, his own thoughts and his own solutions, and I surmise that he hopes the government will listen.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have noted the comments because they're in contrast to some of the expressions I've heard in years gone by from one Norm Sterling—we can now call him his name: Norm Sterling—who was bounced out of his riding in a coup d'état, a long and distinguished member from eastern Ontario, who said that indeed the eastern Ontario development fund was very helpful to eastern Ontario, despite the fact it was hatched in the Harris era. I don't mean the new Mike Harris; I mean the old Mike Harris from North Bay.

I suspect that if you were to talk privately to Senator Runciman, who has landed in the chamber that many have sought to land in, that being the Senate of Canada, as now Conservative Senator Runciman, you would see that he would have considerable support for it.

He can change my mind if he says this, but the present member for Leeds–Grenville, in his heart of hearts, recognizes the importance of a fund of this kind, because it has been extremely helpful to eastern Ontario. Indeed, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus is very supportive of that particular program, and one would think that the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus would be as well.

I know that when a consultation was held in St. Catharines, our business community came together and was very enthusiastic about it, particularly the St. Catharines–Thorold Chamber of Commerce. The business development office of the city of St. Catharines and the regional municipality of Niagara were all supportive. They weren't negative naysayers; they were people who saw the virtue of this legislation and the fact that it could help our part of the province of Ontario financially.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just want to congratulate the member from Thornhill for an excellent presentation and the excellent job that he's doing as our finance critic.

Someone has to start telling Ontarians the full truth about the books of the province of Ontario. Clearly, the Liberal government has not done that. We've just had an election a few months ago. There was no mention of a \$30-billion deficit. They had to hire an economist, an outside person, to come in and tell the truth to the people of Ontario about what the books truly look like. The member from Thornhill, on behalf of the PC caucus today, is reminding the government and reminding the people of Ontario that we simply can't afford another economic development program.

Don't you find it ironic over there that the same day that your Minister of Economic Development, Brad Duguid, announced the cancellation of some 50 economic development programs, you're concocting this new one because it was a campaign commitment to buy votes? Let's be frank about it, folks. In order to pay for this expanded program for the southwest, you are raping, cancelling, other programs that presumably were, by your own account, working in the province of Ontario, or presumably they still wouldn't be around today. You've been in office for over eight years, so if a program wasn't working, we would expect you would have gotten rid of it by now.

The other thing is, it's ironic, on a day today where, this week, our Premier, for my first time in 21 years in this House, is dividing Canada by saying, "Alberta, would you please slow down? You can't be booming any more because you're killing the rest of Canada. Please stop selling oil to the world at world prices." He somehow wants us to give a discount on our barrels of oil that come out of the ground in the tar sands, give a discount and not make money because it's somehow affecting the Canadian dollar.

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"So, Alberta, stop doing what's right for the economy for the people of Alberta and for the people of Canada,

because we are now a have-not province." So Alberta's sending cheques to us now, folks.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm very privileged today to stand up in the House and give my little statement on Bill 11 that's being presented by the Liberal government.

One thing I want to make clear is, in my riding of London–Fanshawe we have had many, many job losses. Most recently, as we are all aware, Electro-Motive Diesel, Caterpillar, shut its doors on our workers and we've lost over 450 good-paying jobs with benefits. So, absolutely, I want those jobs in every region and in my region to be replaced.

This bill has some framework with regard to two things, continuing the eastern economic development fund as well as structuring a new southwestern economic development fund.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I can't hear the comments and questions being made.

Continue, member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There are a couple of concerns I have with regard to this fund. The amount that's being placed in investment, \$20 million for the southwestern economic development fund: Really, if you look at the cities that it'll be servicing for funding, is it going to make enough of an impact to have jobs in place for the severely high rate of unemployment that this community is facing?

Job guarantees are also a real concern. With this government, we've seen time and time again that we need to have strings attached in order to guarantee jobs when we're funding businesses to do so.

So let's look at this bill. We need more details with regard to job guarantees and what contract terms are going to be in there so that these jobs are permanent, good-paying jobs in southwestern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the comments of all members: the members from Beaches–East York, London–Fanshawe, St. Catharines and Simcoe–Grey for their comments.

Notably, my opposite number in the NDP caucus, the member from Beaches–East York, their finance critic, and I agree on many things. One of the things that we like to talk about when we compare Progressive Conservatives and NDPers is that we certainly have a different principle base in terms of how we come at problems, but we very much agree on a number of the different elements of the problems.

What I see in his comments is that that party is also concerned about the economic development of the province of Ontario. As my friend pointed out, we do come at things from a different direction, but we don't disagree on the problem that has to be solved. Indeed, he's correct when he said—and I made a note of it—that this government is trapped by its own nonsensical

perspective on the way things have to be solved. Eight and a half years, and yet you don't learn.

Nobody disagrees on the fact that we have to stimulate economic development in various sectors of the province and that various sectors of the province have different exigencies that we have to address. The issue is how you're going to address it. The way they always address things is, they take our money, roll it up into the equivalent of snowballs and just whack it at the wall and hope that some of it sticks. That is an inappropriate approach, dare I say.

As far as the member from Simcoe–Grey is concerned, he makes a very valid point that I should have mentioned in my own comments, so I'm going to say it again. We just noticed the very minister who introduced this bill a couple of weeks ago in this Legislature taking corporate welfare dollars off the table in the last 24 hours. That being the case, even this government is making a tacit admission that its approach to economic development is wrong. So, again, I say we cannot accept this bill.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wish to preface my remarks here before we get into the meat of the bill by describing what I think is the current state of Ontario—the current state of the people of Ontario, the people who live and hopefully would like to work here.

Unemployment is stubbornly high. Unemployment in places this bill intends to address is even above the standards of Ontario or those of us who live in Toronto. Unemployment has reached double digits in the Windsor-Sarnia-London area. Unemployment has reached double digits in eastern Ontario in the Cornwall-Brockville-Smiths Falls-Renfrew area.

Go to those parts of the province and see what unemployment is like. See the despair in people's eyes. See the fact that there is nothing for them to do and that their children are not likely to remain in those towns or cities in the long term. The families will be rent apart. Children who have nowhere else to go will migrate, perhaps to Toronto, but more likely to western Canada. More likely, the job opportunities that they're going to see that they cannot find where they grew up, where they lived, where their families and friends are—those jobs are going to be found in Saskatchewan or Alberta or British Columbia or Manitoba. So you have the despair of those communities.

I do not blame a government for trying to help those communities. I wonder, though, whether what you are proposing is enough, whether it's adequate, whether it's aimed at the correct places.

Travel around. See some of these towns that once were vibrant in Ontario. See the mining towns, in a little bit, but especially the forestry towns in northern Ontario. See that they're not there anymore. See that the populations that were once thousands of people are reduced, in some cases, to a few hundred, most of them retired,

most of them unemployed, most of them with no hope, or despair—and in some towns, they can't even sell their houses: There is no one to buy them; there is no one who wants to live there. Their lifetime investment is worthless, save and except if they stay there with nobody around them and live out their declining and their final years in a ghost town.

Wages have stagnated. Wages have not increased for the people of Ontario since 1991, once you take inflation into account. That's 20 years that there has been no increase in the average wages of Ontarians, not in spite of all the economic boom times we had for a while, not in spite of the technology, not in spite of the hundred other factors that usually drive wages up. The wages in Ontario are the same today as they were in 1991. All the time, this government seems to be content with a growth rate that has hovered, at best, around 2%. It's pretty shameful.

Then you have the whole issue of corporate tax cuts. I listen to the Premier and I listen to the finance minister as they skate around this issue. I listen to my colleagues in the Progressive Conservatives, who obviously want even more corporate tax cuts, who want to drive us to the lowest corporate tax rate jurisdiction in the world, want us to pay less taxes to the corporations in Ontario than they pay in Mexico or Guatemala or any other jurisdiction that you might name. And I wonder, to what avail? We've gone from having a corporate tax rate of 44%, just before this government took office, to one which is now down to 25%—and I'm including here both the federal and the provincial corporate tax rates.

I have to ask the members opposite and, perhaps, my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party: Has business investment doubled? Their taxes have gone down by half in that period. Have you seen investments in jobs and technology and all of the other things one would normally expect? Have you seen it happen? Have you seen it doubled? Have you even seen it at all? Because the reality is that businesses are not investing in Ontario.

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They're not investing because we have a workforce that is lousy, because we probably have one of the finest workforces in the world. We probably have the best-educated workforce in the world. We have social programs, especially medicare and hospitalization, which is the envy of every single state in the union immediately south of us and probably of most of the world. We have an infrastructure here which is amazing. They are not investing because they don't have to. They are not investing because it's easier to take that money that you have given them in corporate tax cuts—and my colleagues in the Conservatives want to give them even more—and they're putting it in their pocket. Who can blame them? Who can blame these people who are given all this extra money for using it for their own purpose? They don't have to use it for the common good; they have to use it for their good, and their good can be their corporate executives or their stakeholders, shareholders or anything they want.

You know, don't listen to me. This is what's being said in the United States. This is what Warren Buffet is warning everybody about. The world's fourth-richest man is coming out there and chiding the governments of the United States for doing it all wrong, for allowing the rich to become super rich, to allow them to keep all of the money. And that ordinary people who look for that job, that opportunity for staying in their home, for seeing their community built—that's what this government's doing.

So here we have this program against that backdrop. Here we have a program that fails, I think, in three areas. The first one is that it requires no job guarantees. The second one is that it's taking much of the money and the allocations from other programs. We've learned just this morning that a whole bunch of programs which every single member in this House on the Liberal side has lauded for the whole eight years you've been over there—I've heard nothing but talk about the programs and how good they were and how they were working, to build jobs. Then today, the minister stands up in a place that isn't this House and he announces that 50 of them are being shut down and here's a little tiny one that's being allowed to continue.

And then last but not least, the paltry sum—and I say paltry—of \$20 million is being allocated. You know, when you look at government programs and when government gives money to business to develop—the government over there used to talk a lot about RIM, giving them \$8 million or \$10 million or \$15 million to create a couple of hundred jobs. How many jobs do you think \$20 million is going to create over there? How many jobs?

So let's go through them. Job guarantees: There's nothing in the bill that requires a job guarantee. We've all seen what just happened in London. We've seen when Electro-Motive shut down that there were no job guarantees, so a company could pocket the \$5 million—in that case, federal money—and simply walk away. Where is the job guarantee?

A progressive state someplace else—Minnesota, if you want to look—requires that there be a job guarantee for five years. If the jobs don't continue and expand as to the rate that the Minnesota government and the people of Minnesota gave them the money for, it is clawed back. Liberals should be pretty aware of that term, "clawback," because it seemed to be pretty easy to do for welfare recipients. Seems pretty easy to do for ordinary and poor people who are suffering on the margins. Why can't you claw back money from corporations that promise to create jobs and take the money in the first place and then don't do it? That's what Minnesota has decided to do and that's what is contained within their legislation. It's written in the legislation. It's not something that's by ministerial whim or prerogative. It's not something that's done in the regulations that's hidden from public view. It's part of the bill itself. If you don't produce what you promise to produce and keep it going for five years, then all of it, or a percentage of it, is clawed back, right from the legislation.

This government told one of our researchers, when we asked about this, "There's going to be a template that describes how we're going to be able to get some of this money back." But we're still waiting. No template has been produced by this government; nothing at all. There is absolutely nothing to this point that would give me or anyone else any confidence that you have any desire whatsoever to claw back monies when companies rip you off and rip off the people of this province by taking the money and then delivering nothing.

We need to do better. This government needs to do better. If you are going to put \$20 million of the people's money out there, then you had better make sure that there are some results from it. It's quite obvious that this government believes that 50 of your other programs that were extant until this morning didn't solve anything. What gives us confidence that this one will?

I go to the next point, which is the reallocation. Where is this \$20 million coming from? We ask the question: Can any of the members in the government tell me where the \$20 million—is this \$20 million of new money? Is it? It's not. The \$20 million comes from what is called reallocations. I was not aware, when I was looking at this this morning, that there was going to be an announcement of 50 shutdowns of grants and programs. But primarily, this money comes from a little-known thing called the strategic jobs and investment fund—SJIF for short. What is being done by the government is taking the money from that fund to this new one. So what was the strategic jobs and investment fund? It's probably one of the 50 that were canned today. It was designed to support leading-edge investments and jobs in Ontario, not just in southwestern or eastern Ontario but in all of Ontario. It was to make Ontario a leader in looking for leading-edge investments and jobs.

It has been said many times in this House, particularly by government members, that the old manufacturing sector and the way we used to do business aren't the modern ones. That's a pity, because we still have to drive cars and we still need machinery and we still need clothes and we still need manufactured goods by the bushel for the people who live here. And it's a pity that when I or any of you go out to go shopping, you cannot find a shirt or a pair of shoes made in Canada or in Ontario. It's a pity that you often will have difficulty finding food you want to eat that comes from Ontario, and we produce some of the best. It's a pity that when you want to buy canned fruit, there are no canning facilities left in Ontario anymore around Niagara Falls, and all of those trees and orchards have been plowed into the ground. It's all a pity. It's a pity. But here it is: The government has said, "Those old days are gone," and what they've tried to lead us to believe is that we will have leading-edge investments for jobs in Ontario.

To quote from the ministry's own statement on the SJIF—and I think it's a wonderful statement—this is what the government said that that fund was supposed to do and obviously hasn't done. It's probably amongst the 50 that were canned this morning. I quote the ministry as

stating that it is “aimed at innovative companies that make anchor investments in Ontario that support cluster development and leading-edge initiatives that build long-term prosperity and global competitiveness.” That’s what’s supposed to be done.

Is that what’s being done in this new fund you’re asking us to support? Is that what’s happening in eastern Ontario or southwestern Ontario? I don’t think so, because we don’t even know how the money is going to be doled out. At least in the northern Ontario fund, there is a group that is set up, a non-partisan arm’s-length group, that looks at how the money might be spent and doles it out proportionately to those ideas that benefit the communities in northern Ontario. In eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario, the government isn’t even contemplating such a group.

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So it will be handed out, I’m sure, in the usual way governments hand it out: Who comes and makes the best deal; who comes and who they know; who comes and says, “You’ll get your best bang for the buck from me” and convinces you to do it. No arm’s-length, no further discussion—who the Liberals want to give it to is who’s going to get it.

Then you’ve got the whole issue of the \$20 million. What can that possibly do? What can \$20 million do that all of these other funds that have been canned today not do? Is \$20 million going to be enough to support large-scale industry? I don’t think so.

I look back to what this government did a couple of years ago—and I have no umbrage with what they did—when the auto sector in this province was under considerable financial pressure, when the likes of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler came forward and said, “We’re in a bad way.” This government put up hundreds of millions of dollars—hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in order to save that industry and the 30,000 or 40,000 or 50,000 jobs that went with it.

Now, I’m very thankful, impressed and somewhat surprised that most of that money has been paid back. I am thankful that the men and women who work in those plants in Oshawa, or Oakville, or Windsor, or Brampton or the hundred other smaller little places around Ontario have those jobs, kept those jobs. That was probably a wise investment.

But when you ask me what kind of work is going to be done with \$20 million, I have to wonder. It’s not earmarked. It’s not targeting a specific industry or a particular location. It has no checks and balances. It is being taken from money that you’re robbing from other programs that you’re now shutting down, without announcing those in advance.

The reality is, here we have it; here we have this program. What are New Democrats going to do with this? I guess we’re going to allow it to go to second reading. We’re going to hear what people have to say about this. We’re going to have to listen to what small-town mayors in those particular parts of Ontario have to say. We’re going to have to look at where people think

that money might be allocated. We’re going to have to ask the bureaucrats and the minister tough questions about the apportionment of the money and where it’s coming from in the first place, because we believe that ordinary people have to have some hope in their lives. They have to think that something is going to get better. They have to think that maybe, but just maybe, there is a government program or some members of the Legislature who care more about them than about the 1%, who care more about them than the people who have pockets bulging full of money, more about them than the guys who can stand and come to committee and convince this government for the last eight years that all that has to happen is “Give us more tax cuts, and everything will be rosy.” Well, you gave them all of those tax cuts, you did all of those things, and things are not rosy.

All of you have constituency offices. All of you must have people who come in to see you; people who are begging for a chance to get a job; people who are begging for a chance to find decent housing; people who want governments to do things for them.

Well, this government chose, instead, to do the easy thing, to say, “We’re going to ask our friend Mr. Don Drummond”—who I would say is a very smart man, no umbrage on him, but you tied his hands. You asked him for a report telling the people of Ontario how to make \$16 billion in cuts, and you particularly forbade him from telling you where you could find additional revenue. Why did you not want to know that? Why do you not want to know where to find additional revenue? Why do you think it’s only the cuts? Why do you think ordinary people have to live in despair? Why is it you think that we can suffer some of our social programs and those things upon which people rely to be lost?

Heaven forbid we enter the days of Walkerton again; heaven forbid we have clashes in our schools; heaven forbid that people are locked out of hospitals and health care that they need.

It’s time for us to start thinking about those people, and not about the rich. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: After having seen the great students of Pine Ridge Secondary School here on their “i AM WHO i AM” program and delegation, I’m pleased to speak on Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2012.

The new southwestern Ontario development fund will help us address regional economic challenges facing southwestern Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me; I think you want to wait until your turn in rotation. This is just questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He is; he’s responding.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay, sorry.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Give him more time, Speaker. We want to hear.

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I could start over at the beginning, because I know a lot of my friends across the aisle would—

Mr. Paul Miller: No, no.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Okay; I'll commence where I left off, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

We recognize the value and uniqueness of southwestern regional economic development. We're committed to working with our regional partners in southwestern Ontario, particularly to build strengths, generate new economic opportunities and attract the jobs of tomorrow. We will be consulting with business leaders and stakeholders, and they will help us design a program that may take the needs of the region into consideration.

We were very successful in eastern Ontario with this development program, with over 11,700 jobs. I know the previous member, Lou Rinaldi, for Northumberland–Quinte West worked hard on that, and the new member, Rob Milligan, I know will continue this good work.

Just a couple of quotes, Madam Speaker. I have a quote from a former federal MP and minister and the current mayor of London, Ontario, Mayor Joe Fontana: "Ontario's southwestern economy needs a shot in the arm and the proposed southwestern Ontario development fund is just the way to do it." Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind all members that they are to, in the responses, consider the remarks of the previous speaker in their consideration.

The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the member from Beaches–East York's comments. He's also the finance critic for the third party, and he brought up some good comments in respect to Bill 11 here, which is the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have politicized and, actually, I think, jeopardized the eastern Ontario fund by bringing in this bill. We did have a fund. It has money in it. It has money, actually, left over in it, which we have asked questions—and I know the member from Beaches–East York has brought up the accountability problems within this bill, Bill 11, that we are bringing forward. I know that our critic who has led this bill—we're very, very happy to have him in the Legislature; the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—has put order paper questions in.

With respect to accountability on this fund—I'm part of eastern Ontario, in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I certainly want to attract more jobs; I need more jobs in the riding and I'm fighting to attract more jobs to the riding. So we had a fund, the eastern Ontario fund. It was working well, we've heard. We've all been, I think, at ROMA, at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and the Good Roads convention. We've been back and forth with our municipalities. They would like to see some changes to the eastern Ontario fund. We were

pretty firm in telling them that the government has politicized and jeopardized the eastern Ontario fund by bringing it into a piece of legislation adding in southwestern Ontario. Those are real concerns.

So when they say they'd like some changes to better fit the needs of being able to tap into the eastern Ontario development fund, we're saying that this bill isn't specific enough to say what the changes are going to be. It's going to be buried in regulations. There's no structure to this bill, as the member from Beaches–East York has said.

So this bill is really not good for my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I would hope the government would have been more flexible with us, in listening to us, but—thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Beaches–East York for a fine presentation. Certainly, being the former mayor of East York, he knows his finances.

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Speaker, I see we have an eastern Ontario fund, which has done a lot for the community out there, and now the government wants to create one in southwestern Ontario because it has been hard hit. I would like to remind the government that the two hardest-hit areas in this province were Hamilton, Niagara and Welland and southwestern Ontario, so I'll just be looking forward to when they start the Hamilton–Niagara fund. We certainly could use it. We've lost more jobs than anyone else in Ontario.

A case could be made also that there should be across-the-board legislation requiring accountability in all business subsidy programs. Minnesota's clawback law is a good example of best practice in this area. The law requires that subsidy recipients sign formal subsidy agreements, which must include clawback language enabling the state—or province, if you want to—to recapture all or part of a subsidy, with interest, if a company does not fulfill the terms of the contract. The legislation requires that every subsidy program contain minimum requirements, including wage standards, and subsidy recipients must commit to wage and job goals. Companies that fail to meet their commitments are barred from receiving further subsidies in the state—and it could be "province"—for five years until they have repaid what they owe.

This is something that has had a lot of thought behind it. It's been successful in Minnesota, and other states are looking at it. The problem with the programs in this province is that they hand it out with no requirements, and no commitments from the recipients of these funds, other than maybe for political reasons.

If we want to really get our books in order, if we really want to change the large deficit we have, we have to consider having these companies commit to their communities for a period of time: commit to jobs, commit to the equipment that is bought and sold in Ontario instead

of bringing it in. That's when you'll start making success stories.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I did listen to the remarks this afternoon from the member from Beaches–East York, and indeed the finance critic for the third party.

It's interesting to note that the eastern Ontario development fund and the idea that we need to enshrine this legislation was an idea from the eastern Ontario wardens' conference, and the past chair of that conference was actually the warden from Peterborough county, Mr. J. Murray Jones, who I had the opportunity to chat with yesterday. And why they wanted the eastern Ontario development fund enshrined in legislation is that they went through the experience before, when the old Eastern Ontario Development Corp. was eliminated, just by the stroke of a pen, through regulation, and they wanted to make sure that that never happened again. So indeed, by having the legislation here to support the southwestern development fund and indeed the eastern Ontario development fund, if that fund was to change, then the legislation would have to come back to the House to be amended, and there would be a full debate from all parties of the House to look at the future of the eastern Ontario development fund.

So make no mistake, it didn't come from government MPPs or opposition MPPs; this was the idea of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, to ask that this be enshrined. And if you were down at ROMA/OGRA yesterday, they reiterated that position: They want to see this bill enshrined. They're the ones that have been driving this, and this is why they've been driving this initiative.

The other thing to note is that a recent study came out by Luc Vallée, who is an economist with the—let me check it here—Canadian economic development corporation, talking about the greatest pressure on Canadian manufacturing in Ontario and Quebec: the rapid appreciation of the Canadian dollar from 63 cents in 2001 to today where it's beyond parity—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I thank the member from Ajax–Pickering, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Peterborough. All of them had interesting things to say.

I thank the member from Ajax–Pickering for assuring us that the government intends to send this to committee and listen to stakeholders, because I think it's absolutely essential that the stakeholders tell us how they want this new corporation to be run, how this new money is going to be given out and that it just cannot be given out in the way that so many grants are given out by governments—without any kinds of strings attached, particularly

without weighing the pros and cons of everybody who is applying for it.

For the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, you're absolutely right: There are accountability problems inherent in this bill.

My colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about the experiment or the legislation in Minnesota, and gave some detail as to how it works. Really, it is tough legislation, because if people in business want to get government grants or loans or guarantees, then they have to come with the proviso that if they do not deliver, just like any contract, there are penalties involved. It cannot be, "Take my money and run away and I'll turn a blind eye," anymore. People are sick of seeing their tax dollars wasted. They expect something in return, and that something is good jobs.

The member from Peterborough talked about the wardens' conference. Yes, I heard from the wardens' conference myself, attending the AMO and ROMA conferences over the last number of years as the municipal affairs critic. I used to have six hats; now I only have two. But I heard those same things. They are very good ideas, and it needs to be enshrined in the legislation. But having said that, it needs to be done correctly.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

I'm very pleased to speak to this bill. I think it's an important one, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and south-western Ontario, from the Honourable Brad Duguid, Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

I made my living for 35 years in the counties of Prescott and Russell and of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and other areas of eastern Ontario. I know, over those 35 years, how hard the small businesses worked to manage.

I think the history of these small villages and small towns, and certainly the history of those small developments in Renfrew county, as well—the ability to move their firms from the level of sort of subsistence to the next level where they have the modern technology and have the modern equipment is often a very difficult decision for them. They're making a living; they are doing well. It's always a difficult decision to make, to make that investment, to put those dollars out and jeopardize the future of their corporations. Being in business, that's what it is: You're always dealing with risks.

Ottawa–Orléans was not included in the original eastern Ontario economic development fund. I think that it should be, but it wasn't in there. But I do know what was happening, and I was at two openings where about 15% of the expansion dollars, the dollars invested in new

technology and new equipment—I was at two openings of that, and it expanded the ability.

In one case, they were making hydraulic turbines and they were selling mostly—this was just west of Ottawa. They were selling mostly to California and New York. I think those were the two areas. But with the new equipment that they were getting, the new investment they were making, the new technology they were buying, they were going to be able to service a lot of—I think they also had contracts in Spain. And so with a lot of the new water generation coming up, they were looking to expand the size of the hydraulic generators they could make. I was just impressed that they had gone to their banks, they'd gone to the governments, they had put it together, and our investment in that was around 15%. They were able to move that up. They were able to hire 10 or 15 new people; they were able to make the existing staff they had more secure.

I think it's extremely important to have this assistance. It's easy to say, as the member from the third party has said, that we want to make sure that we have all of these criteria in place so that if they aren't a success, then they have to pay the money back. But I think that that is not the way we've leveraged our money. It's not a major part of the overall investment.

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Most of them have been successful. The two that I went to just to see the new facilities, they were both successful. What I've heard in eastern Ontario from Jean-Marc Lalonde and from Jim Brownell before is that these were projects that were excellent projects for the communities and helped them move into a more competitive position and keep their people. So it's not as if it was 50% of the dollars that we were putting in. It was a small amount of money in comparison to the overall dollars. I think the \$20 million over three years leveraged \$485 million in investment across eastern Ontario and helped to create and protect over 11,700 jobs. Anything I have heard about this program showed that it was a very successful program, that it met the needs in these small towns and villages that get forgotten when you look at a big province like Ontario.

I was at the suite for the United Counties of Prescott and Russell and Glengarry last night, and it was good to see these mayors and councillors very active, up here for the Good Roads and the ROMA conference, and really working hard to do the best they could for their own small villages, small towns and small communities. They were working very hard at it, and they knew that this program was important to them. That's where it came from: The wardens wanted this program. They got this program for eastern Ontario, and it has been a successful program.

I know that I've heard a lot of complaints: that it takes a long time, that it's hard to get the dollars. But the projects that were supported were excellent projects. They were going to keep the people working. They were going to permit the growth that was needed to get into the

new markets and expand their production and their workforce.

This proposal for an additional area, southwestern Ontario, is supported by the Southwest Economic Alliance, the Western Wardens' Caucus, South Central Ontario Region and many more.

I think we have to look at what has happened to some of the communities like St. Thomas, Chatham, Windsor, Guelph and Stratford. They've had major impacts from the high Canadian dollar and the very low labour costs offshore. Trying to keep manufacturing and some businesses going is very important, and even though this isn't a great deal of dollars, we'll find that they're important dollars to those communities and we can get them going.

In the case of Ottawa-Orléans, we've just had 10,000 federal jobs transferred from central Ottawa, where they're 20 minutes away for our 100,000 people. They're now going to be over an hour away by bus and more than an hour away by car, out in Kanata. That was a decision that was made by the city of Ottawa—with OCRI and with all of the western power we have in Ottawa—and the federal Conservatives took those jobs. Ten thousand jobs: That's going to really hurt us in Ottawa-Orléans. That's going to really hurt Clarence-Rockland, Wendover and Hawkesbury, because those were the people that filled those federal jobs, that commuted to Ottawa every day. I think we might have 4,000 or 5,000 jobs lost in Ottawa-Orléans, 1,500 jobs lost in Clarence-Rockland, and so down the line, a major impact on Ottawa. I'm hoping that Ottawa-Orléans is in the new area for eastern Ontario, and I think it should be.

These are good programs. They're excellent programs for Ontario, and if we're going to make them too rigid and we're going to have to get guarantees for about 15% of the dollars, I'm not sure how that will work out. I know that the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation who set up the controls on these projects were very stringent, were very tough on the applicants, were looking to make sure that any project that was approved was approved after careful consideration. They were all judged on the basis of which project is the best to maintain the existing jobs and to create new jobs in the future.

My experience in the smaller municipalities—and I don't think western Ontario is much different than eastern Ontario in that way—they need that support from government.

It's not as if it were dollars that we're paying for 50%, 60%, 70%. We leveraged those dollars. The \$485-million investment in eastern Ontario—I think that was four years, so maybe that was \$70 million or \$80 million of ours, so we're within the 15% to 20% range on those investments. We've created jobs.

Jean-Marc Lalonde and Jim Brownell told me often how important it was for their communities. They worked very hard, because Hawkesbury has always been an area that has struggled with very high unemployment. Clarence-Rockland had the benefit of employment with the federal government, in the national capital region. It's

a little bit better. But in most cases, high unemployment exists in eastern Ontario; it has for a long time.

With the major changes in the world economies, the major change in manufacturing in Ontario, we have had significant losses of manufacturing jobs, as everyone knows in southwestern Ontario. So moving part of that program into southwestern Ontario, using the same criteria which have been successful—this is important work for us to do, and I very much support what we're doing.

We have to look at not only the big companies; I think a lot of the jobs—and I think this is what the small business groups say—are created by small business. We have to come in and help them. We have to do our part so that they can help build our economy and help keep us going.

The importance of this fund to the smaller communities: Technology moves very quickly, and I think, the projects I saw, that's the area that we were concentrating on, in technology and on equipment upgrades.

We must support the areas outside of our major cities. We must support those areas. They're suffering a great deal more. This program will certainly help us to get there.

On the basis of the experience over three or four years—I sat in on many of the meetings with the eastern caucus members. I heard a lot about the program. I saw two of them that were successes just west of Ottawa, one for the hydraulic turbines, the other for casting, a casting plant. I think that we have a success here. Because of what's happened in the last three or four years with southwestern Ontario, they deserve the same treatment.

This will pay off in keeping jobs and building jobs and helping us to get through a situation that is not made in Ontario. Everyone knows this is not made in Ontario. Compared to most world economies, Ontario is doing very well. The HST has made our companies much more competitive.

I think that you should support this program in other parts of Ontario. I hope you do when it comes up for a vote. Thank you very much, Speaker, and I'll turn this over to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: It gives me much pleasure to speak to this bill, and I'd like to thank everybody else who participated in this debate.

I'd like to begin by saying that it boggles my mind that, on the one hand, the opposition keeps talking about a jobs crisis, but when this government comes out with a credible plan to create jobs, all they can do is criticize. In fact, I feel you guys are speaking out of both sides of your mouths because I know that the member from Leeds—Grenville, for instance, is very interested in tapping into the EODF.

As to the charge that we are politicizing the EODF, I have to say that I think it's the PC caucus that is doing it by pitting the west of Ontario against eastern Ontario.

We are not politicizing it at all; we are trying to be fair to any area that needs the help.

I also want to say that I think this government does know a thing or two about attracting foreign direct investment. It's not an accident that Ontario is the second-leading jurisdiction, just after California, to attract foreign investment, which means that this government knows what it's doing. But it's all about attracting investments and creating jobs. We have a track record to prove it.

1650

As to the charge that we are giving money without enough controls, that's not true. I have worked at the Ministry of Economic Development. I have personally worked on these funds, and I know that every time we give money out, it is with strict covenants and clawback requirements. That is already there, including job creation targets. So it is not true that we give taxpayer money out without—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Responsible and well administered.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Exactly. As my colleague here is saying, we are very responsible in the way we administer these funds.

It's one thing to criticize the bill. We, on this side, are willing to work with concrete suggestions that talk about how we can make this bill better, but it's quite another thing to completely toss it out and say that it's a waste of taxpayer money. So if you have concrete suggestions as to how we can make this bill better, we are happy to hear that. But you can't just say, "This doesn't work." You cannot speak out of both sides of your mouth and on the one hand say, "There's a jobs crisis in Ontario," but not come up with any constructive advice as to how we can create jobs. How can you talk about subsidizing the horse racing industry but at the same time say that EODF or giving money to industry to create jobs is wrong? I just don't understand how you can speak out of both sides of your mouth at the same time.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Ottawa—Orléans and also the newly elected member from Mississauga East—Cooksville.

I'm going to concentrate on the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for the moment—not to pick on her, but she made these comments over and over again. She talked about speaking out of both sides of their mouths.

You talk about the pot calling the kettle black. Today, the Minister of Economic Development was waxing on about how they're reviewing over \$2.3 billion of business economic aid and grants because they don't know if they work or not. So here are the two sides of the mouth: You've got \$2.3 billion; here you've got \$160 million.

But let's talk a little bit more about two sides of the mouth. When they promised, in the eastern Ontario development fund, that there would be \$80 million over four years—not quite so. Not so fast, Speaker. They shut

it down when there was \$23 million left and said that they never actually said they'd give \$80 million over four years—another broken McGuinty promise.

I'll tell you one thing. I will say to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville: The one thing about Dalton McGuinty is, he can break a promise speaking out of either side of his mouth. There's no problem. Left or right, it makes no difference. If he makes a promise, you can rest assured it will be broken.

This is the problem right over here with this government: They are trying to pit the eastern Ontario fund, which has been successful, against western Ontario. They're trying to rob from the eastern Ontario fund to try to set up the west.

I say to the member from Peterborough, who was going on about the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, asking for it to be permanently entrenched: They never, ever mentioned the western Ontario fund. They wanted this eastern Ontario fund protected, and you people have gutted it for political reasons.

There's two sides of the mouth for you, Madam Speaker, right over there. They are duplicitous beyond belief.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to address the member—
Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member from Ottawa–Orléans talked about small communities in eastern Ontario. Does the member really think there are no small communities around Hamilton? Let me give you a few: Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Mount Hope, Grassie, Grimsby, Stoney Creek, Binbrook, Copetown, Waterdown and Grimsby.

We have lots of areas in Hamilton that need help. We have one of the highest unemployment rates in the whole province. We've been hit the hardest, next to the Windsor area and southwestern Ontario. But I don't see a Hamilton–Niagara fund being created.

If you're going to rob from Peter to pay Paul, let's do it right. Let's spread it around a little. You've totally ignored Hamilton, Niagara, Welland. Approximately 57 companies have left. We've lost 22,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. For some reason, this government thinks that Ontario ends in Burlington and the GTA. It doesn't, and it doesn't just go to southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario. We had one of the strongest manufacturing bases at one time. We were one of the most productive places in Ontario, and we, once again, are getting left at the bus stop. We, again, are being ignored.

Naturally, the member from Orléans is going to stand up, because he's from eastern Ontario. That makes sense. You are doing your job for your community, but the other area you're going to work on is where you lost seats, in southwestern Ontario. Methinks it may be political. I'm not sure.

So I'd safely say that if you really want to look at who's getting hit hard, you might want to drive with me

through Hamilton and the area down there. We'll talk to all of the people who are sitting in the malls, in the Legions and other places because they can't get a job—thousands and thousands.

Have I heard this government once talk about Hamilton, a fund for Hamilton, Niagara and Welland? I haven't heard a word about it, so maybe we should start—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly enjoyed the remarks of the member from Ottawa–Orléans and the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

I was asked a question the other day: "Where can you find a copy of Changebook?" I'm told that they're all now on the bottom of the Niagara River because it was pitched under the bus pretty quickly.

But let me get back to the eastern Ontario development fund. This is a program that has been very successful in eastern Ontario. In my own community of Peterborough, 12 entities have been given support under the eastern Ontario development fund—everything from a multinational like Siemens, who produce the water and wastewater technology and machinery in Peterborough, through to McCloskey Brothers.

Interestingly enough, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, came to Peterborough airport to visit Flying Colours, which was the recipient of an eastern Ontario development fund grant. What did the Right Honourable Stephen Harper say that day? What a great organization and business; exactly the kind of thing that we need in manufacturing in Ontario.

What better support for this program than the Right Honourable Stephen Harper? I appreciate his support of the eastern Ontario development fund because he took the opportunity, first-hand, to see the success of the eastern Ontario development fund.

But it's going to be interesting in the weeks to come to see whether those members on the opposite side from eastern Ontario are going to be here to vote for this piece of legislation, or are they going to pull the Houdini act and disappear for that afternoon when that vote will come up? We'll see exactly where they stand on the eastern Ontario development fund and the proposed southwestern development fund.

These are excellent programs. They'll be working on behalf of businesses, both in southwestern Ontario in the future and continuing to support businesses in eastern Ontario.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Again, I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 11, which is the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2012. Sometimes we interpret it as "Robbing the eastern Ontario economic development fund," which we keep trying to express.

I know the member from Peterborough has had some successes. I've had successes in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. We don't disagree that the eastern Ontario economic development fund has been successful. They're

politicizing it by combining it with southwestern Ontario and making it into legislation. So when the member asks where the votes are going to be, he is actually admitting to the fact they have politicized this bill.

This isn't about helping people in Ontario. They've politicized it to try and wedge the opposition over here. That's not caring about the people in your ridings. You could be jeopardizing the people in eastern Ontario and in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock by robbing it of the fund that exists now, the eastern Ontario fund. There are still order paper questions. We met with the minister last week to say, "Hey, where are the answers to the order paper questions that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has put in?"

We've all said, "Where's the framework?" The legislation tells you nothing. It tells you nothing. So how are we supposed to be responsible with government bills if you don't give us any information? Again, no questions from the order paper that were put forward. Time is ticking, and the minister said he'd get to them as quickly as possible; I don't think he has given us any answers. Again, a little shell game—it's shocking from the Liberals over there, just shocking from the Liberals.

I say to the people in eastern Ontario: Watch these guys. The Liberal government is playing a shell game. We're going to be the losers in eastern Ontario. We just need some changes to that fund. Leave it alone. There's money left over; where is that going?

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Ottawa-Orléans has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He thought we should have kicked that \$23 million out the door. With an \$80-million project, it was \$57 million spent. There were very tight controls in those projects all through. I know that. I heard from the members who were applying for those projects, but it benefited many, many members across eastern Ontario.

We're not pitting southwestern Ontario against eastern Ontario in this. It's just that after the downturn with manufacturing, there certainly is a need in southwestern Ontario. So the same program, with the same principles, with the same good results, certainly, will be welcome for the people there.

To the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek: I'm sure that you have your needs in your municipality and in the Hamilton area, but this was a promise made during the campaign. It was the Southwest Economic Alliance, supported by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, the South Central Ontario Region, the Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance. They called on the Ontario government to create a southwestern Ontario economic development fund in the lead up to the 2011 provincial election, and we included that in our election platform. There may be some work for you to do in your area in order to get the assistance you need for some small businesses that may be able to stabilize their employment and increase their employment with a little money.

I thank the member for Peterborough, who has been a staunch supporter of this and one of the people who got it going in eastern Ontario. He has done an excellent job. He has had some good successes in his area, I'm sure, and he knows how stringent the requirements were for this program but how many good companies got them.

To the member for Haliburton-Kawartha: This is a good program; it's a program that we need. Thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to it.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I respect the comments made by the member opposite from Ottawa-Orléans regarding this bill, but I see it differently.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his thoughtful, stern denunciation of yet another Liberal spend bill and for his continued work to fight for strong jobs for Ontario workers.

As a proud MPP for a southwestern Ontario riding, I consider it a great privilege to have this opportunity today to expose this bill as yet another prime example of this government's inability to cope with the fiscal crisis that they have created.

In just eight years, this Premier and his government have dug us a hole so deep even a list of the taxes they've introduced wouldn't reach the bottom. They only know one direction, and that's down. They keep digging, hoping against hope that somehow they'll emerge in an alternate reality where they haven't made a complete mess of Ontario's finances.

The old joke used to be that if you dug straight down you'd eventually end up in China. Well, science tells us that we'd actually end up somewhere else: in the Indian Ocean. It's almost as if this government wanted to find out for themselves, isn't it? They keep spending; they kept digging Ontario into a deeper pit, and now the province that we love is right where logic tells us it would be: under water. We joke because if we don't, we may cry.

Ontario has 600,000 people out of work—600,000. That would be like taking my home riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex and eliminating the job of every single person who lived there six times over.

That number is made up of 300,000 jobs lost in the manufacturing sector. That's 300,000 people with no way to put food on the table for their families, to put a little more money away for their child's education or to afford new hockey equipment. I'll say it again: 300,000 people out of work in one single industry, an industry that has a proud history in my riding. Because my colleagues opposite could not discern the difference between a need and a want, Ontario families are now struggling to afford their needs.

I invite the members opposite to come to Chatham-Kent-Essex riding. Come and talk to the families, the small businesses and the workers. I've spent a lot of time getting to know them in my 50-plus years of living there; I'll introduce them to you. Some of them were born and

raised there. Sometimes they come from other provinces; indeed, other countries. They work in health care, manufacturing and construction. Some worked a night job while going to school to pay for their university education. Some made it out of high school and, through sheer determination, started a business that has sustained generations of their families. They come from different walks of life, Madam Speaker, but I can tell you one thing they all have in common: Every single one of them could look the members opposite in the eye and tell them the difference between a need and a want.

There's another gentleman that has tried mightily to tell the Liberals the basic lesson. This lesson is something that my own children even understood before they were three years of age. That man is Don Drummond. The members opposite are looking in every possible direction, but don't let that fool you: They know who he is. That's because they chose him themselves.

Mr. Drummond took on the daunting task of cleaning up this government's crippling mess, of making the tough recommendations to pull Ontario back from the brink. Over 360 recommendations were made, Madam Speaker. These recommendations overwhelmingly indicate that Ontario needs a desperate change and we need it quickly.

Yet, here we are today. We're facing, as my colleague so grimly pointed out last week, a \$411-billion debt. It's waiting there at the end of the road, and this is where this government is merrily leading us down, without a thought or a care to where it might be headed. Even after the Drummond report clearly stated in no uncertain terms that any spending project must be balanced with equal or greater savings elsewhere, this government sits here discussing plans for a \$160-million gambit that will not create jobs; it will only succeed in further solidifying Ontario's future as Canada's equivalent to Greece.

It's as if they were leading us down this road on purpose, because they know their hold on government will be short-lived. It's as if they want to leave this government and the people of Ontario in a huge mess. It's as if they're thumbing their noses at us, saying, "You're the government now. You figure it out."

This is a slush fund, pure and simple, and it's not the first. This government was recently caught targeting Liberal ridings with their multi-million-dollar eastern Ontario development fund, which lavished 80% of its activity on Liberal-held ridings. Madam Speaker, why should families trust them again?

This smacks of the same desperation that has permeated this government for so long as they scramble for a solution to the problems they've created. It shows, without a shadow of a doubt, that they have not learned the lesson that was handed to them again by frustrated Ontarians in the last election. They couldn't be honest with them then about the trouble the province is in. They can't be honest now, when they say they're actually going to consider the options Don Drummond has given them. Instead, we get \$160 million more in spending without a single, solitary, reasonable cost-cutting measure to show for it.

1710

Here's a very short list of what they've brought to the table: \$20 billion in spending since the recession, \$2.5 billion in new spending since the election, and now \$160 million that will not create the jobs that Ontario so desperately needs.

My colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex knows all too well the troubles that have afflicted the communities we share in southwestern Ontario. He outlined this government's inaction when Caterpillar shut down their London plant, how this Premier allowed those jobs to just pack up and leave town, and crush families as they did so, not to mention the feeder industries that were also affected. Shame.

My home riding has experienced its share of heart-break as well. While this government spent the province into oblivion, Chatham-Kent-Essex has lost over 10,000 jobs since 2003. It breaks my heart to list the companies that have had to shut their doors: Navistar, KS Centoco, Oxford Automotive, Fleetwood Metal, OES in Blenheim, Energy Automotive, Siemens VDO, ArvinMeritor, Daymond Aluminum, Southwest Regional Centre, Great Lakes Fish, Penske Logistics, and the list continues—150 businesses closed since 2003, Madam Speaker.

These jobs haven't disappeared because the workers in those communities gave up; they disappeared because Ontario is no longer the best place to run a business. That ugly reality affects more than just job numbers in the census; it affects families, moms and dads, friends and neighbours, people who thought they would always live in a land that would give them every opportunity to succeed if they worked hard enough. But then this Premier slapped them with a dog's breakfast of regulations and red tape, with skyrocketing hydro bills that crushed manufacturing and natural resource industries from Toronto to Timiskaming. That's been their only plan all along: more government meddling in place of the action that would actually staunch the lost jobs.

It's embarrassing. The members opposite won't look me in the eye, but they don't have to. They know that it's their fault, that they not only failed to act when the moment was upon them to do so, but that they made the situation worse by not being able to see the difference between what they wanted and what the province needed. It's shameful. It's a shameful state of affairs. It's going to take a lot of hard work to get this province back to a place that welcomes business once more, instead of hindering it.

Yet amidst these embarrassing realities, Madam Speaker, I can say that I am proud of a few things.

I'm proud, first and foremost, that my own children have grown up to understand the basic common sense this government lacks, that when you have run out of money, it's time to stop spending.

I'm proud of where I'm from, the beautiful communities of southern Ontario that never ask for government handouts, never shift the blame to where it doesn't belong, and never, ever give up, even though their own

government has. This government drops the ball again and again.

And I'm proud of the caucus with which I stand today, a group of people and leader that all saw the writing on the wall long before Mr. Drummond had come along to shake some sense into this Premier and his moth-eaten wallet.

If I may, now I'd like to point out for the members opposite exactly what I mean when I say that the writing is on the wall. We all remember, of course, the recent general election in Ontario that sharply rebuked the Premier's apparent mandate of spending every cent he could find. Ontario families sent him back with a message to get his act together, start making the tough decisions, and work with the other parties to get it done. Good advice, Madam Speaker. Ontarians saw that our party had long been serving up the ideas that would actually succeed in bringing businesses and jobs back to the places where they had once been lost.

And if that wasn't enough proof, Don Drummond, the Liberals' own hand-picked adviser, agreed with Ontarians too: There were better ideas out there than the Liberal mission to double the province's debt. Those ideas belonged to our party.

I'd like to quote from Drummond, if I may, on the subject of arbitration reform: "Ability to pay' criteria should be broadened to include economic and fiscal environment, and productivity criteria in arbitration awards/decisions." That's on page 373 of his report—a clear call, Madam Speaker, for the kind of arbitration overhaul that the PC Party has long called for, one that might make life a little uncomfortable for the Premier's union friends but will go a long way to reducing the public sector compensation that has been a fiscal albatross in Ontario for too long. Not only that, but it shows respect to municipalities that have struggled to make their communities work amongst the meddling of this government. These communities don't want slush funds disguised as handouts, Madam Speaker, despite what the government would have you believe by bringing this bill forward. They want a fair deal. Imagine that.

Ontarians agree; Mr. Drummond agrees; the PC Party agrees. The Liberal government looks the other way.

I quote again, Madam Speaker, from Drummond: "A significant opportunity exists for ServiceOntario to find new capital and expand services by leveraging private-sector investment and participation through competition"—page 389 in his report. If that sounds familiar to the members of the House, it should. Our party has long called for increased ability for the private sector to contribute to public life in Ontario through better competition. That way, we can draw upon the talent and expertise that Ontario has always been known for while simultaneously securing the best deal for Ontario families when it comes to government services.

Ontarians agree; Mr. Drummond agrees; the PC Party agrees. The Liberal government looks the other way.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I'd like to highlight one more recommendation that this government would do

well to heed. The government should "review existing agency mandates and functions" to ensure that every one of them is living up to their stated purpose. That's why we on this side of the House call for a top-to-bottom review of the more than 600—that's correct, 600—agencies, boards and commissions that were funded by or are currently receiving the tax dollars of hard-working Ontario families.

I'm careful not to call it "government" funding here, Madam Speaker, because I believe it's a misnomer. It's not government funding; it is tax dollars pulled from the pockets of every honest, hard-working Ontarian who thought that they were going to work so that they could feed their families, not pay for this Premier's pet projects and political posturing.

Ontarians agree; Mr. Drummond agrees; the PC Party agrees. This government looks the other way.

There's only so long we're going to be able to say, "It's not too late." There's only so much time left to turn Ontario around, Madam Speaker. Let's have this session of the Legislature be the "better late than never" session instead of the "too little, too late" session, because this government will never, ever be able to say that they weren't warned. They can no longer hide behind the flimsy excuse that they were taken by surprise by tough economic times. No, no, no; that time is gone. That excuse isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

Over the past months, while the Liberals waited for Don Drummond to fix their troubles, we saw an Auditor General's report that detailed in no uncertain terms the waste and mismanagement the members opposite perpetuated. That was a clear, non-partisan call for change in direction, and nothing happened. There was the inevitable downgrading from Moody's Investors Service that broadcast to the entire world just how bad things are in Ontario. The word Moody's chose was "negative." I would have chosen some harsher words than that, but out of respect for the House, I won't say them here. It was a moment that should have seen all the members opposite hang their heads in shame, and they should be doing that now as well.

1720

Finally, the Conference Board of Canada, a respected institution, had to hold this government's hand and explain, as I used to do with my children, that you'll never save money if you keep spending more than you have in your pocket.

Would you like to know the scariest thing about all this? This government really and truly believes that it is at the end of an economic success story of their own creation: 600,000 people out of work, 300,000 jobs lost in one industry; warning after warning after warning from industry experts, all desperately trying to tell them that they're wrong, wrong, wrong, and that things are not in fact getting better in Ontario; an election that spoke volumes about the frustration of Ontario families; a report from Don Drummond that warns of a \$411-billion debt, a number so insurmountable that it's difficult to comprehend.

Speaker, I stand today to oppose this bill wholeheartedly. I believe that Ontario families will as well, because frankly, nobody trusts this government with more spending. That's the last thing that we want to see. Families should be recoiling in horror every time this Premier opens up his wallet. More corporate welfare from this government? No. More handouts, slush funds and mismanaged tax dollars? No. More of the same failing strategy of deciding which businesses get to struggle along in a damaged Ontario and which ones are left to fend for themselves. I say no, our party says no, Don Drummond says no and Ontario families and workers say no.

It's time to create the conditions for success instead of putting an expensive Band-Aid on this government's failures. It's time to give Ontario businesses a much-needed hand up instead of a handout. Let's get energy bills under control. Let's eliminate crippling red tape that keeps businesses struggling to breathe instead of flourishing. Let's make Ontario the best place to start a business and keep it running, and let's start right here by telling this government: Sorry, but you can't spend your way out of this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd like to draw attention, for all members, to the fact that we have in the members' gallery Ron Johnson, the former member for Brantford in the 36th Parliament. Welcome, Mr. Johnson.

We'll move to questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I am happy to add my voice to this discussion regarding attracting investments and creating jobs. It's my first thought, of course: The creating jobs act—what's not to like about it? After all, that's definitely what we should be talking about here in Queen's Park, but once again, my mind seems to come back to statements I've heard through previous bills that we've spoken about: that the title sounds better than what's actually inside the bill. So it's concerning to me.

In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, I know that what people are calling for is jobs. Again, as my colleague here—thank you, Mr. Miller—has brought forward, we're not talking about jobs in Hamilton; we're talking about jobs in other regions, which of course, we all need, so it's definitely concerning.

People want to work and they want to be part of a community. They want to be able to pay their fair share of taxes for services that we need in our governments, and we want to be able to be accountable to the people of Ontario. So we have to make sure that the money that we're investing in investments like this is being held accountable, that we do have strings attached and that we're not just giving money away without saying, "There is going to be a consequence if you don't use the money where it's deserved to be spent." These are the things that the people of Ontario are counting on us to do. Hopefully, when bills like this go to committee, we'll be able to make sure that we do get the wording in there that is going to be protecting our citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I represent the riding of Oakville, which isn't in southwestern Ontario, but I think as members of the House we do try to pay attention to what's happening in the other areas around the province. We learn from each other, we have a sensitivity to some of the problems that are being experienced in other areas and where the successes are as well. So it was interesting to listen to the remarks of the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Let me tell you right from the start, even though I'm not from southwestern Ontario I will be supporting this bill, because it makes sense. It makes sense for the businesses and it makes sense for the communities in southwestern Ontario. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, who represents that area, certainly is free to make up his own mind as to whether he'll support the people in his community or the businesses, or will support the job creation that surely will flow from this investment.

Interjection: Free vote.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: But as I said, it's a free vote in this House and certainly he can vote as he sees fit.

As a result of strategic initiatives in my own community, for example, I think of the Ford plant. There was a time when the auto industry was in trouble and the federal government and the provincial government stepped forward and made some strategic investments. What that allowed was for the Ford plant to move into flexible manufacturing. What that means is the Ford plant in Oakville has a very bright and rosy future—moving into the future, obviously—and that cars will continue to be there.

Now, he asked us to take advice from that party. This is the party where the graduation rates, when we took over, were in the 60s. Just over six out of 10 kids in our high schools were graduating; millions of days lost in school strikes; the longest wait times in the country when it came to hospital and health care; and they stand here today and try to lecture us on how we should run an economy. You should be ashamed of yourselves, the way you turned this province into a have-not province.

We've got it back on track. The way we've got it back on track is by investing in places like southern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. Step forward and support Ontario.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Boy, the member from Oakville sure has his facts mixed up, because I believe when this government took over, we were the have province in Canada and now suddenly it is a have-not province after eight years under Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government.

I am standing here to respond, though, to my colleague the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. He put out a lot of numbers during his 20 minutes while he was speaking there. There were a lot of numbers there: 600,000 jobs lost; a \$30-billion deficit is what we're headed for under this government; a \$411-billion debt.

I'm proud to stand here with the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, because he represents his constituents extremely well and he will in the future, and that's why he's here.

There was a long list as well of companies that have gone out of business in Chatham–Kent–Essex over the last eight years. He listed them all. You heard them, surely. It was a long list, and I think he probably had more, but he only had 20 minutes' time to work with.

You know, it's time for this government to realize that they have dug an incredibly deep hole in the province of Ontario. They've run companies out of business. Companies are jumping over the border from Ontario to Quebec now, because they can get cheaper electricity prices—and I don't know if the member talked about electricity or not, but we know how much electricity is going up: the Auditor General said himself, 46% over the next couple of years in the province of Ontario because of a failed Green Energy Act here in Ontario. It's something that needs to be addressed right away, before we lose even more industry in the province of Ontario, and I know my friend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will stand up for the members in his riding and do the right thing, just as we will.

It's time for this government to stop playing political games with something that was working in eastern Ontario, the EODF, and stop playing their little political games with this fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I listened intently to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex and what he had to say. And you know, I often have an opportunity to travel in south-western Ontario and around the Chatham region, and one can only despair—I hope the people there don't despair, but I despair in my own soul, my own heart, for a few minutes when I go into Chatham and I see the number of businesses that have been closed; when I see the downtown core not as vibrant as it once was. It is a very pretty little town and I would invite all the members, if you've not been there, to go and have a look.

But this is the same thing: He is feeling for the people of his town, the people of his region and what they are suffering. They are starting to lose hope. I don't know whether this program the government's proposing is going to give them some hope. I can only say in my own heart that anything that is done that gives people some kind of hope for the future is the right thing.

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I don't know how he's going to vote either, but I was really impressed when he brought out the whole issue of corporate welfare. It took me back to my youth. It took me back to that marvellous campaign when David Lewis was the leader of the federal NDP and he ran the whole campaign on corporate welfare bums. He was talking about all of those corporations that take all of the government grants and don't pay anything in taxes. I remember, in those days, who they were. They were the

big banks, the insurance companies, and the multi-national oil companies. Those were the guys who took all of the money and paid nothing. Well, 40 years later, you have a Conservative raising the same issues, but the same thing is still in effect. You've got the big banks, the insurance companies and the gas and oil companies taking millions of dollars, getting all the government grants. If there was ever an issue of corporate welfare bums, it's here still.

God bless David Lewis, and thank you to the Conservative for raising this issue 40 years later.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Oakville, Prince Edward–Hastings and Beaches–East York for their enlightening comments and their honesty.

Madam Speaker, I believe this: that a good idea doesn't care who owns it. I look at this bill—in my heart of hearts, am I for job creation? The answer is definitely: Yes, I am. In my area, as I pointed out in my talk earlier, we've lost over 10,000 jobs since 2003. Coincidentally, I believe that's when this government took office. However, having said that, we look at the monies that they have given away in the eastern economic development fund—not so certain that all that money has been accounted for. I do have some concerns, not so much where that money went—we know that about 80% of it went to Liberal-friendly ridings—but it's what happened to those businesses that, in fact, were given that money to grow, to develop, to flourish under their plan—I give them credit for that—some of which are not around today. So I have a concern about that.

I believe that there needs to be greater accountability. Job loss, job creation—and I talked earlier about corporate welfare. That's not the way to do it. So, let's free up business to create and innovate. Let's get rid of the red tape. Let's clean up government-funded agencies, boards and commissions to improve their efficiencies. If they're not working, get rid of them. If it's workable, clean it up. If they're working fine, leave them alone.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I've been around here for a few years—not as many as Mr. Bradley here, who I think was here when the glaciers first receded and grass first re-established itself in this region. I don't say that as a bad thing. I recognize those who have experience and bring that long-term wisdom to the table. I've picked up a few things in my time, Madam Speaker, and generally I find that the longer the title of the bill, the less there is in it.

This is An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and south-western Ontario. As I read those words, you can feel the content of the bill shrink and shrink and shrink, because

you have to have a big title to cover this kind of small property—empty, thin.

The explanatory note—this is the good stuff: “The bill requires the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation to continue the eastern Ontario development fund”—we need a bill to continue that fund; I know that you, Speaker, are shocked, but that activity was in danger and may well be saved by this bill; my goodness—“and to establish and continue the southwestern Ontario development fund to promote regional economic development in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. The minister is to conduct a review of the effectiveness of these programs by the fifth anniversary of their continuation and establishment.”

Now, I have to tell you, the rest of the bill isn't much longer than what I've just read out.

So for those of you in southwestern Ontario, those in London, Ingersoll, Woodstock and Chatham-Kent-Essex, those who are today looking for a job, hoping to be able to establish their lives, pay their rent, pay their mortgages, get in groceries, those who want to send their children to college or university, keep them in high school instead of yanking them out and seeing if they can find a job themselves, I have to say, do not place all your bets on this bill.

Is this bill wrong? Not necessarily. Investing in local economic development can be a good thing. But is it weak? Absolutely, absolutely. This is not sliced bread. This is not the second coming of Mr. Ford—and I mean the original industrialist and car manufacturer. This is much thinner stuff.

This bill comes before us really as an empty vessel for the transfer of funds. There was no program brought forward, no strategy that was introduced. I've seen too many of these bills. Just before the last election, we had another water bill introduced by this government. I know there's an election coming because a bill is introduced to save water in Ontario: had it before 2007; had it before 2011. I remember going through the debate on that bill—Mr. Prue was here—and I kept saying, “I see the bill, but what's the plan?” You know, I look at California and they bring in these water bills. They actually have targets; they have ideas of what needs to be done. They talk about the larger plan. We didn't get any plan. What we got was a very long title with a very small bill.

Speaker, when you look at this—and my colleague from London-Fanshawe had this to say and my colleague from Hamilton Mountain—I don't see anything in here about jobs having to be guaranteed by those who receive the funds. Nope. So you can give out the cash, but will you actually hold the jobs here?

Mr. Paul Miller: Or recover the cash?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Good question. When I look at the background on this—and my colleague from Beaches-East York talked about this—funds are being reallocated from other job creation programs: robbing from Peter to pay Paul. I've been particularly offended by that slogan throughout my life. Mr. Hamilton East here has always been very happy with it. But that's what

we have. We're shuffling the shells, looking for where that quarter is going to wind up, and it's been moved. It has been moved from one shell to another shell.

Spending money on job creation is not a bad thing, but I have to say—I understand the amount of funds that are going to be allocated here, about 20 million bucks—it's more money than I ever hope to see in my life. But there are about, what, 300,000 people living in London? Let's say, three people to a home, about 100,000 homes. This is the equivalent of the purchase and sale of about 100 homes every year in London, so we're talking about a very small wave in a very big ocean.

There are millions of people throughout southwestern Ontario facing a very ugly situation. Southwestern Ontario has gotten the stuffing kicked out of it in the last eight, nine years.

Mr. Paul Miller: How about Hamilton-Niagara? Wow.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Not to mention Hamilton-Niagara, but they're not included in this bill.

The economic impact of buying or selling 100 houses in London is pretty small compared to the scale of the problem before us. Again, not nothing, but very, very thin comfort for those who were trying to pull their lives together, for those who want to have some confidence for their future.

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Think about what's working against those people. Think about what this government has done that is undermining their economic future. Just the other day, I talked about the report from the SEACOR Group about the \$1.5 billion a year that's being taken out of our economy because this government overbuilt on gas-fired power plants, overbuilt on nuclear power plants. That money that could have been used to build the economy in southwestern Ontario instead is going off to profit companies in Texas and Alberta.

Madam Speaker, about a year ago, the Toronto Star reported that when electricity companies in Ontario export power out of the province, that power is subsidized to the tune of \$200 million a year for five years—a billion bucks. This \$20 million gets lost in those kinds of numbers, but those have a huge impact on us.

Let's talk about the ongoing and other big drain on the economy of Ontario, and that's the ongoing corporate tax cuts that undermine our public services. If you need transit or if you need good roads going through your city, the \$2 billion a year that are given in corporate tax cuts mean that your infrastructure is not well maintained; that skilled engineers, skilled construction workers, skilled accountants don't have the opportunity to put in place the infrastructure that we need.

Our education system: stretched. Talk to any teacher in this province; talk to students in this province. They can tell you how that undermining of provincial finances through those corporate tax cuts is undermining our ability to educate the next generation to actually build the workforce that Ontario needs.

Our overburdened cities, our municipalities: coping with, grappling with, downloading that came during the period of Mike Harris, and not corrected by this government.

I had the opportunity in the previous Parliament to sit as the finance critic. My colleague Mr. Prue can speak about his experiences with it. One of my opportunities was to actually sit down with the Minister of Revenue at the time, Mr. Wilkinson, and go through the impact of the HST on Ontario's economy and on working people in this province. You have to know, Speaker, that the HST was this huge tax shift—a shift of the burden of taxes from corporations, that were doing very well, to individuals, the great mass, the public of Ontario, who have to carry that big load.

About half of the \$5 billion in reduced tax payments by companies went to the construction sector. Did that get passed on to those who bought homes or condominiums? Did people see big cuts in the cost of houses or condos? No, Madam Speaker. Those savings went into the hands of those who were getting the cuts. They didn't go back into our economy; they went into the mammoth pools of cash that are being held by huge companies throughout this province and pools of cash held by companies outside of this province. When we look around at everyday people and their ability to buy goods and services, to pay tuition, to put clothes on their backs, to buy those homes that I talked about—their ability to buy and thus our economy's ability to grow and to function has been grossly undermined.

Madam Speaker, in the course of the pre-budget hearings last year, I had the opportunity to sit through a variety of presentations. One presentation showed the impact in Canada, over the last decade, of corporate tax cuts. I have to tell you that that strategy, which has been central to this Liberal government, encouraged by the official opposition, has not given us what we needed. In fact, if you look at the statistics, every year, as corporate taxes were cut, corporate investment in Ontario has dropped. That's the reality. That's the reality; that's why that strategy is a failure.

If you take the opportunity—you can go to the legislative library; you don't have to walk far. One of these pages—very capable pages—can go to that library and get the book *A Governor's Story*, written by Jennifer Granholm. I urge all of you to take the opportunity to read that book. Jennifer Granholm was the governor of Michigan earlier in the last decade, and she writes about her experience coming into power in a state which had been subjected to an ongoing tax cut agenda. So when she came into power the cupboard was bare, and as she came into power the economy of Michigan, based on car manufacturing, started to falter. Her strategy, Speaker? Her strategy was to cut taxes wherever she could in Michigan. And you know the bitter thing she learned? The very bitter thing she learned is that it didn't create any jobs in her state.

Yes, she slashed social services; yes, she cut investment; yes, towns, municipalities and rural areas faced

hard times; but even when she offered deep-discount rates to corporations, they said, "I can still do better in Mexico. Forget about your tax cuts."

She did note, however, that Ontario's public health system did offer a cost savings to auto manufacturers that she couldn't match in privatized-health-care Michigan. So health care cuts for us don't help us. Tax cuts for corporations don't help us. Tax cuts for Michigan didn't help Michigan. Jennifer Granholm went through it, did it and has a lesson that we all need to learn from.

This bill has got to also be understood in the context of this Liberal government's record. Even before 2008 and the crash then—and my colleague Michael Prue, who was here, and all of you who were in the province at that time know that we lost hundreds of thousands of good jobs prior to the crash. We were yelling about it in 2007, during that election. Before the 2008 Wall Street crash, this province was losing jobs, and since then we have continued to lose them and we have converted good jobs. We—the policies of this government—have allowed good, family-supporting, career-developing jobs to decay so that more and more people are trying to survive on less and less.

It's no surprise that, with the loss of jobs and conversion to lower-skill, lower-paid employment, average hourly wages in Ontario, when you take into account inflation, are the same as they were in 1991. Two decades and stagnation in the standard of living—stagnation.

Speaker, this bill may not be evil, this bill may not move things backwards, but this bill is so small and so weak, compared to the task before us. This bill is put forward in the context of no real economic development plan on the part of the government. This bill is put forward without even an independent board to allocate its funds to insulate these monies from political interference or gaming. This bill has no guarantees for jobs and does not speak about even giving the province of Ontario the ability to claw back from corporations when they don't actually hold to their promises. My colleague here from London—Fanshawe spoke about the experience with Caterpillar, the money that was given by the federal government, the jobs that were lost when that company, Caterpillar, took that money and, really, with very little thought, very little hesitation and certainly no remorse, decided to move the jobs out of Ontario.

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Speaker, one would have thought that this government would have learned from Stephen Harper's mistakes. One would be wrong. One would have thought that this government would have looked to its federal party's comments on federal corporate tax cuts. One would be wrong.

This government is bringing forward this bill to do its best to look good to the people of southwestern Ontario. But in terms of actually making a difference to the lives of the men and the women who are living there, I don't have a lot of confidence that it will make that change.

Speaker, I look forward to the comments of my colleagues and I hope that, at some point in this chamber,

we will talk about economic development strategies and plans that will make a difference to people's lives.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I always enjoy the member when he speaks in the House, particularly on a bill of this kind. I detected that there was some support for this particular piece of legislation. I want to commend his party on that.

I would recommend to him a book that I just obtained from the library. I had it last time. I had it out so long, they had to send a posse to get it from me—and then they didn't charge me any fine, which was nice. But I went up to the library while the member was speaking, his words echoing in my ears, and got the book. It's called *Minding the Public Purse*, by Janice MacKinnon, who was the NDP Minister of Finance in Saskatchewan in the 1990s, when they were struggling with a deficit situation in that province. It's very instructive, particularly for New Democrats, because she had to go through a very, very challenging and difficult time with her own colleagues recognizing the circumstances that arose, and not all of the things that government would like to do, they could do. This was a period of time in which the NDP unfortunately closed 52 rural hospitals in Saskatchewan—not because they were mean, not because they were callous people, but because they recognized at that time that that was one of the things that had to be done to solve their problems.

I want to say to the member that I was in St. Catharines for a consultation on this bill. He said that it's not very thick and it doesn't have details, but indeed we were speaking to the local community to ask, "What do you think should be the framework of this bill?" because we like consulting on these matters.

The chamber of commerce was there with rounds of applause. The local business development department of the city of St. Catharines, the region of Niagara and others—the business development community was there, and they were looking forward with anticipation to this bill passing in the Legislature. I said I would convey to all of my colleagues in the House the desire to see it passed. They've loved this in eastern Ontario. My friend Norm Sterling was a great fan of it, as was Senator Runciman, recently appointed to the Senate by Mr. Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada. So this is—

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting that I hear the comments from our member from Toronto–Danforth, and I agree that this government has no plan. We look at the Drummond report where it talks about cutting spending by 17%, and the 362 recommendations: We're waiting to hear where they're going with it with the budget fast approaching. We were hoping to see some committees so that we would go around the province and get some public input, but public input is not something this government is looking for.

As the Drummond report said, 28% of what this province is spending on health care is actually wasted

and has no impact. It's time that we look at what we're doing and where we're going.

It's interesting that he talks about his favourite book, *Minding the Public Purse*, because this government has been very good at minding that public purse when it's increased and added over 100 new taxes and fees over the last eight years. It truly is an expert, and I can see that he must have had that book out for the eight years, because they're after him and trying to get it back.

But I think it just looks at needing some strategy, and we're not seeing that. We look at the Green Energy Act and where it's gone. We see hydro rates that are going up 45% over the next four years, and is there any reason why we wouldn't think they wouldn't, with plans where you start to build plants, like in Mississauga and Oakville, and then turn around and cancel them? Unfortunately, it's a bad way of getting \$1 billion worth of spending in jobs, because now they have to go back and take them down.

So we're looking at this government and asking for a strategy that actually works in getting our people in Ontario working again—600,000 people unemployed. I think it's time to act, and they're asking for action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few words to what my colleague from Toronto–Danforth had to say about this bill, Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act in southwestern Ontario. As some of my colleagues have explained, is there a need for job creation? Absolutely. This recession that doesn't know when to end has put a lot of people out of work in that region of the province, as well as many other regions. Do we support job creation? Absolutely.

Why is it that we have a bill in front of us that would put a mechanism to flow funds, but doesn't talk about job guarantees? How could it be, after we've talked for many, many years about how, when government is going to help the private sector develop our economy, there has to be a link to the workers? Because if it doesn't create wealth for the people of Ontario, if it doesn't create good, stable jobs for the people of Ontario, then we see what happens. We've seen what happened in London, where they took government money, closed up shop and out they go—with all of their workers, through no fault of their own, finding themselves without a job.

It is the kind of bill that has a good name: the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. In the title it says "creating jobs," but in the bill, it doesn't say that it will have job guarantees. It doesn't say that there will be strings attached to that money so that, if you don't create the jobs you had talked about, the money won't flow, and if you break that promise the money will be clawed back. None of that is in the bill. It's a very cute title; a little bit light on some of the important points.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker, and I enjoyed the remarks this afternoon from the member from Toronto–Danforth.

I understand with the southwestern development fund, there is consultation going on in St. Catharines, Hamilton and Niagara and other parts of the Niagara peninsula. I don't usually read the St. Catharines Standard, but I just happen to have an excerpt from Saturday, February 25. There's a nice picture of Jim Bradley here.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, I am. I'm going to get there.

But I know that the member from Toronto–Danforth, if he happened to have had the opportunity to read the St. Catharines Standard last Saturday, would have seen a company that's growing in Thorold, Ontario: a solar farm, the type of company that I believe will be supported through the southwestern development fund. It's also a very nice picture of the energy minister, Mr. Bentley, at the same event.

So if you take the opportunity to read this article, you can see the kind of expansion that's helping and going on in the Niagara Peninsula, the opportunities that will present themselves with the establishment of the southwestern development fund—a real opportunity for businesses in that area.

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Lots of good stories in the Peterborough Examiner, too. I have my picture in there every once in a while cutting a ribbon at a business that just got support from the eastern Ontario development fund.

But I must say, just recently I know the great mayor of Cornwall, Ontario, Bob Kilger—Bob Kilger was one of the great referees in the National Hockey League, and I know that Bob—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond. First, to the member Mr. Bradley and his comments about the NDP coming in to clean up the mess after a tax-cutting government: I know, Speaker, that this government is talking about the desperate situation that the province's books are in, about the report from Mr. Drummond, and I have to ask, is it the case that Mr. McGuinty didn't get the straight goods from the previous government about the state of the province's finances when he ran in the last election? Was he surprised when he got elected to find out the perilous situation we were in?

I appreciate the comments from the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, from Nickel Belt, from St. Catharines, from Peterborough. You're right, member from Peterborough: I should read the St. Catharines Standard more often to see the paid political announcements put in by the Liberals lauding their achievements and featuring pictures of their ministers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Paid for by our tax dollars.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It may well be. But from now on I will check that paper more religiously, because if there's

anything I need more in my life, it's more pictures of Jim Bradley smiling at me.

Madam Speaker, enough of the levity. People need jobs. I wish this bill was going to actually address what was needed and the way it was needed. This bill, Madam Speaker, is very, very weak indeed.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 39, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SKILLED TRADES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Simcoe North has given dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

We'll just wait until members have exited.

Okay, the member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity this evening to say a few words. The reason I called for the late show is that I asked a question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities today and I simply got no answer whatsoever.

The question I asked was about why the government would host a partisan reception here at Queen's Park at the expense of the taxpayers, because if the College of Trades is paying for it, quite simply, it's being funded by the Ontario taxpayers. It's a partisan event because only the parliamentary assistant and the minister were asked to speak at it—no members of the official opposition. That's to begin with. I think that's very unfair that they would do that. But I understand why. We all know the connection to the Working Families Coalition, and the Working Families Coalition's connection to the College of Trades. It's as simple as that.

Why I wanted to get to this point is that it goes back to a question I asked last week in the Legislature when I asked the minister about the College of Trades. He responded that, you know what—he said everyone he's talking to out there is in favour of the College of Trades. They think it's a wonderful thing. That's what the minister said. Yet, I know that he has met with people, and I have met with the same people, who represent over 2,000 companies in the province of Ontario and 80,000 workers in Ontario, and they're very concerned about the College of Trades. They want it either scrapped or completely restructured.

First of all, the governance body is completely unfair; it's made up of Working Families Coalition types and a couple of other people's names that are thrown in there

just to make it look like there might be some kind of reason about it.

Second of all, what it doesn't do, Madam Speaker—the College of Trades has a mandate for compulsory certification of all trades, without any grandfathering. They will not talk about grandfathering of trades. There are literally thousands of employees, workers across Ontario, whether it's in the road-building industry, whether it's in construction of any type—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Electricians.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Now, electrical, for example, is a compulsory certified trade. It's already covered. But there are all kinds of trades—drywallers, welders—that don't require the full apprenticeship program. Our concern is that if you take men and women who are in their 50s and 60s and you expect them to go back and do an apprenticeship, complete with all of the schooling, the time they would need to spend at school—and already these are the people who are doing the jobs. They are the people that you can send out west to work on pipelines, on high-pressure lines, if they're a welder; the people who can grade a parking lot perfectly with a bulldozer or run an excavator in road construction types of things. They would no longer be considered a trade or an apprentice; they would now have to be compulsorily certified by the Working Families—by the College of Trades. That is what I'm getting at. The minister doesn't agree with that. He thinks that everyone loves the College of Trades. Nothing could be further from the truth.

And now what we're hearing—this is what's happening—is that now the automotive sector is finally waking up to what's happening with the College of Trades, and all of these garages etc. out there, and people who do body work on vehicles etc., are now starting to understand, "This is coming at us." Right now, if you're a licensed electrician in the province of Ontario, ladies and gentlemen, you get your licence in the mail from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It costs you \$60 for three years. Already, we know that the number the College of Trades is throwing at tradespeople is between \$100 and \$150 per year for them to join the College of Trades and get their licences. How many tradespeople out there actually know that's happening? Hardly anyone. They're going to sneak it in the back door.

So what are they doing? They want \$31 million from this government this year to do compulsory certification. That's why they want to have the lobby day: to make sure all these people on the government side are down there having their food and their fancy cheeses etc., and they're convincing them that this is the right thing to do.

That's all I was talking about here today. I want an answer: Who was paying for that tonight? We were invited, but we're not allowed to speak, so it is automatically a partisan event. It's completely partisan, and as far as I'm concerned, in this assembly it's completely illegal. It should not be paid for by the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, to have a partisan event and support

an organization like the College of Trades, which we all know in truth is the Working Families Coalition at heart.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to respond to the member's comments about the information session that's being hosted right now as we speak by the Ontario College of Trades.

Let me state from the outset that all of the numbers that I've heard quoted by the member opposite are incorrect and are grossly overstated. The session here tonight is to ensure that all members of the House have access to accurate information about the exciting new initiative with the College of Trades in Ontario. It's taking place in rooms 228 and 230. They've invited all members of the Legislature, including the member opposite, to attend and to learn more about Ontario's apprenticeships and skilled trades.

It's an opportunity for all members of the House to meet the board of governors of the college, the leaders of business, skilled workers, the unions, the educators and the trainers, and the representatives of the public at large who serve on the College of Trades. It's an opportunity for all members of the House to ask questions of this diverse and very enthusiastic group. It's also an opportunity for all members to learn more about the exciting institution that is going to help build apprenticeship training in this province. It's an event where members can listen to what board members have to say about how the creation of the college is going.

Speaker, our government is the first in Canada to make apprenticeship a priority. We've doubled the apprentices currently being trained in Ontario, to 120,000. Not only that; we're enrolling more than 29,000 apprentices each year. It's nearly double the apprentices under the previous government.

We created the Ontario College of Trades to work with us to ensure that the best apprenticeship is available for all Ontarians. It's the first of its kind in all of North America. It's driven by the industries that it represents: for the trades and by the trades. The college is going to give the skilled trades sector ownership of decisions that are critical to their practices and their own businesses and industry. It's going to align apprenticeship training directly with the needs of industry. It's going to provide balanced leadership that considers the needs of employers, employees, apprentices, the economy and the public at large. It's going to give industry the responsibility to make those critical decisions, including decisions about training ratios, and in a more accountable and clear process than has existed in the past.

It's going to provide industry and skilled workers with a platform to promote skilled trades careers and apprenticeship training to young people in Ontario, and that's going to create a new generation of skilled workers for Ontario.

They've hired a permanent CEO and registrar, Bob Guthrie. They've elected a chair, Ron Johnson. We're

confident in the leadership of Mr. Ron Johnson, the former Conservative member from Brantford. Honourable members who are attending today's information session will be able to learn much more about these two gentlemen. They're going to have an opportunity to meet the men and women who are building the College of Trades right here in Ontario.

Members of the member's own party, the Conservative Party, have RSVP'd that they are attending tonight. Let me give you the names of some of those members who have indicated that they will be attending. Michael Harris will be attending, for example—the member for Kitchener–Conestoga. The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jim McDonnell, is attending. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has indicated that he'd like to attend and learn. Now 19 members have indicated that they'll attend. For some reason, the member is not attending himself, and I think, as the critic for apprenticeships, that his job is to be there.

I'd like to invite the member opposite to attend and all members who are tonight to attend. I regret to inform them that there will be no alcohol served. That shouldn't stop them, though. I still think they should go anyway.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It has been an opportunity to illustrate to the people of Ontario and, I hope, to the member opposite—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: But who's paying for it?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —that the progress that's being made by this College of Trades is something that the people of Ontario really want to see for young people who want to enter the skilled trades in the province of Ontario. We had a very, very clear legal opinion from the ministry today—and I'd ask the member to make these accusations outside of the House. But we've had a very, very clear legal opinion from the ministry that we're clearly not violating any laws by doing this. I think that you have cast shadows and aspersions on some volunteers. I say, you go to the reception, look at these people in the eye and have the courage to make the accusations that you've made.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Would you take the comments outside, please.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. As you've noticed, I have requested this late show debate because of my dissatisfaction with the minister's answer and a question concerning the government's proposed talks on future uses of Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia.

I point out from the outset that my dissatisfaction results from the fact that the aboriginal affairs minister, despite announcing proposals for discussions on future uses of Douglas Creek Estates last week, had no information when I asked for details this morning; no answers whatsoever as to my stated questions, and I repeat, who will be at the table, where will these meetings occur, when will they happen, how much will it cost? Finally, what's going on? Where's the public consultation? Where's the transparency in this process with respect to such a volatile ongoing situation down at Caledonia?

Today marks six years—no answers from this government. Quite frankly, for those who have been forced to live through six years marked by chaos, intimidation and home invasion, answers are the least that this government must provide—certainly not another round of secret meetings.

To go back, it was on February 28, 2006, that Dawn Smith and Janie Jamison blocked the entrance to DCE in Caledonia. I have walked back in there probably 16 times now to speak with the militants, and I can report, six years later, that the scars of the resulting mayhem remain and continue to seed division in our community. It blocks home building, commercial and industrial development. To this day, a once-promising subdivision, something like 600 homes at present—I would have been there Sunday night—features warrior flags, occupiers in the model home, a burned-out tractor trailer and a hydro tower barricade. The subdivision remains undeveloped and untouchable.

To mention the hydro towers that come in from Niagara, again through intimidation, six years ago that project stopped. It's a project that runs between Douglas Creek Estates, Caledonia and Six Nations.

So, Speaker, six years of lost economic activity, not only in Caledonia; in Haldimand, in Brant county, in the city of Brantford. Businesses, homeowners and investments very simply have been scared away by the threat of confrontation and violence.

At one time, and up until six years ago, Haldimand county was home to the fastest-growing small town in Canada: Caledonia. We have now seen, from Haldimand itself, a 1.5% decline in population. By the most recent census data, the community has lost 650 residents, in part from the dismal economic conditions locally and the erosion of justice and the rule of law, government policy and the democratic process.

The recent sentencing of Richard Smoke in the beating of Caledonia's Sam Gualtieri reignited much of the debate yet again with respect to two-tiered justice. Regrettably, the apparent tolerance of those in authority for chaos and intimidation has resulted in a mistrust and a loss of confidence in our institutions, not only of this government but of policing, justice and governments in general.

You'll understand: People in my area are frustrated. They truly need to know what's going on, particularly when the government starts talking about future uses for

an area taxpayers paid for but are not allowed to set foot on. They want to know, when the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs follows their DCE proposal with statements inferring that “at the heart of the matter is a 200-year-old land claim”—I made note of this this morning. There’s no land claim. There are a number of valid land claims throughout the Haldimand tract area, but not on this subdivision. Chief federal negotiator Ron Doering noted in November 2007, “In this particular case, Douglas Creek is not a valid claim”—

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

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really am very happy to have an opportunity to provide clarification to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk on the status of the Douglas Creek Estates lands.

As the member well knows, there’s a lengthy history to the issue that extends back 200 years. More recently, the lands of Douglas Creek Estates are a part of a number of unresolved land claims filed by Six Nations with the federal government, going back to 1987. The claim is also part of active litigation commenced by the Six Nations in 1995 against Canada and Ontario.

But if we look at some more recent history, we’ll see that in September 2006, Six Nations had 28 outstanding land claims with the federal government. It’s those outstanding land claims that led some members of the community to conduct protests on development sites.

It’s frustrating to me, and I would think it would be frustrating to the MPP opposite, that the land claims main table, led by the federal government, has not met since October 8, 2009. We have to remember that Six Nations is adamant that it has an outstanding claim, an outstanding grievance with regard to the Douglas Creek Estates lands. Six Nations rejects Canada’s assertion that there was a valid surrender of Plank Road. Furthermore, Six Nations is still in active litigation about these lands.

I have to point out at the same time that Canada rejects Six Nations’ claims. But we’re talking about semantics here. Canada’s rejection of the claim does not solve anything. Six Nations still maintains a grievance that needs to be dealt with, and the only two parties who can address the grievance are Canada and Six Nations. Madam Speaker, only the federal government can resolve the underlying issues surrounding the Six Nations land claims. In the interim, Ontario will continue to work with all parties, including municipalities, to try to resolve the issue, but ultimately it is up to both parties, Canada and Six Nations, to come together.

What we, Ontario, have always maintained is that issues around land use, development and consultation are best resolved through discussion. We believe that locally proposed solutions are the best solutions, so Ontario will

continue to work in partnership with municipalities and Six Nations to find solutions that arise around development. But I think it’s important to remember that there is some progress being made. Sometimes the good things that are happening aren’t given the recognition that they deserve. I’m working to build a consensus among leaders on the ways to move forward regarding land-related matters in the Haldimand tract.

You know, even if I accepted the analysis of the member opposite, it doesn’t lead to a conclusion that doing nothing is the answer, so since my appointment as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I’ve made a concerted effort to reach out to all the parties involved and to urge them to work together to resolve their differences. I’ve met with the Six Nations elected chief; I’ve met with the mayor of Brant, the city of Brantford and Haldimand county to discuss the need to renew the negotiations on economic development and the future use of Douglas Creek Estates lands.

Canada’s negotiation staff confirmed with Ontario that Canada awaits the appointment of a new negotiator for the community. I’m encouraged that the Conservative federal member of Parliament for Brant is quoted in the media saying, “Canada stands ready to settle Six Nations’ land claims. We have stood and continue to stand ready to do that job.” Meanwhile, as a province, we’re working with everyone involved—Six Nations, local municipalities, residents, developers and private industry—to help build better relationships.

But we’re not alone in the desire to build goodwill. We’re supported by the efforts of many area residents. I want to specifically talk about the pen pal program between Caledonia and Six Nations students. There are about 1,800 students from Haldimand county, Hamilton, Six Nations and Mississaugas of the New Credit involved today. I think, Madam Speaker, that we could take a lesson from those kids. They’re working to come together to build consensus and community.

We need the federal government to get back to the table. The federal government has been absent for a number of years. We need action. Ontario will continue to urge them to come back to the table, and I would strongly urge the member for Haldimand–Norfolk to help us in this endeavour. I urge him to reach out to his federal colleagues and tell them that they need to get back to work to resolve this issue and to work with all parties involved. I expect—I presume that that is the role of MPPs: to work for harmony, to work for the resolution of issues. I look to the member to join us in that.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning, February 29.

The House adjourned at 1824.

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Tuesday 28 February 2012 / Mardi 28 février 2012

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