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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 May 2012

Mardi 8 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM
OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU
D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts/ *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I will be sharing some time with—
Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, thank you. Thank you, House leader.

I will be sharing some of the time with my deputy critic from Huron–Bruce.

Speaker, I rise today to address the second reading of the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012, which amends the Electricity Act to allow for the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority.

Upon first reading last week, I expressed my doubts about the claims regarding the anticipated savings the minister expects to achieve through this legislation and said that it would actually do little to address the real problems within Ontario's electricity sector. This bill merely tinkers with the edges, and it certainly doesn't bring any relief to Ontario families, seniors or small businesses.

But now, as I have had time to digest the full scope of Bill 75, it is my opinion that not only is this a very bad

bill, but there are very ugly aspects, as it strips a great deal of information that is public now, and only seems to enhance the culture of secrecy this government has become famous for.

This legislation is a \$25-million excuse to put more power in the hands of the minister and put the minister and his closely guarded agency above scrutiny. We all know how that has played out with regard to the Samsung deal and the Ornge scandal, and we know about the Ontario Power Authority when it comes to being less than transparent and cooperative. For example, we're still waiting to see what the costs are, related to the cancellation of both the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, which, some have estimated, put it in the billion-dollar range.

I'd like to get back to some of the comments the minister made in his opening remarks on second reading of Bill 75, Speaker, but first I'd like to take us on a little trip down memory lane. Sitting in the mayor's chair in North Bay for seven years afforded me plenty of opportunity to interact with provincial politicians. I raised an eyebrow a few years ago when I first heard an MPP use the expression "dirty coal" at a non-energy announcement. Then I noticed that each Liberal MPP had worked that phrase into their speeches regardless of the topic. As a lifelong marketing executive, I quickly realized they were trying to deflect the fact that it was the Conservatives who actually announced the closing of coal plants in Ontario. The Liberals in fact have failed to ever close a coal plant, but it makes a great sound bite, and the Liberals continue to suggest that wind and solar have replaced coal, something not even one person in the energy sector would ever agree to. We'll talk about that a bit later. But this facade that wind and solar will replace coal paved the way at that time for a new program entitled the Green Energy Act.

Now, Speaker, the stated purpose was to "green" Ontario's energy sector through conservation and renewable energy generation, an admirable goal nonetheless. To ensure the GEA promotes the desires of the alternative power industry ahead of the needs of Ontario businesses, electricity consumers and families, the government removed all municipal planning powers over the development of renewable energy generation. Now, we have one of these that's starting in my own riding of Nipissing, Speaker, in the community of Powassan, just south of North Bay. The council there has seen exactly how their hands are tied, but again, we'll talk a bit about that in a moment.

Speaker, when you neutralize the municipality, which is the public's only forum to fight a rezoning; when you toss around phrases like "dirty coal," which stifles naysayers; and put a green label on it, which minimizes the opposition, then you've got a perfect storm for procedural abuses, failed fiscal oversight and a gross misuse of taxpayer dollars.

I've spent the last seven months meeting with industry stakeholders from all sides and from every aspect of energy production. I've been assessing the Ontario energy sector for these last seven months, and it will be no surprise to anyone who pays a hydro bill that I believe the Green Energy Act to be a complete and utter disaster.

So how did we get here, Speaker? Well, communities have been forced to accept wind and solar farms, which are paid some of the highest subsidies in the world to generate power the province simply does not need. Then we pay the US and Quebec hundreds of millions of dollars to take our excess power, so energy prices skyrocket and force companies to close or move. The more companies move away, the less demand we have and the more surplus energy we pay to export and the endless downward spiral continues.

This government created the Green Energy Act with the stated purpose being to "green" Ontario's energy through conservation and renewable generation. To achieve this, Speaker, the government removed—I repeat, removed—all local municipal planning powers over development of renewable projects.

But the real reason wasn't so much to do with local city councils. By taking away the municipality's power, the only opportunity for organized public hearings was also removed, and that is the underlying reason and that's the real shame in all of this. So while a community may need a public zoning meeting to site a Tim Hortons, for instance, none is required to put a 500-foot-high steel wind turbine almost immediately next door.

0910

The Liberals then also introduced the FIT subsidy, which pays unbelievably high fees to wind and solar producers—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a very good deal on the receiving end. Our leader, Tim Hudak, calls it the new gold rush, and I believe he's incredibly accurate and insightful in calling it the new gold rush.

But the Liberals also granted wind and solar producers guaranteed access to the electric grid, and that's where the real problem started. So not only do they pay an unbelievably high price, but they guarantee that whenever wind is produced, it will be bought and placed on the grid.

To accept that energy, which often comes at times we absolutely don't need it—the wind blows predominantly at night—the government stops making some of our traditional energy. So they allow water to flow—to spill, actually—over Niagara Falls and through the run of rivers without capturing the power. Now, this is over generators that we've already paid for, generation facili-

ties that sit idle for those periods, that we've already paid for. We allow that water to simply spill and be wasted. They also abruptly shut down nuclear plants and allow the steam to vent outside instead of powering a turbine. So they're spilling water, they're venting steam and they're draining jobs. These are very costly solutions to accommodate wind.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's the spill, vent and drain plan.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's the spill, vent and drain plan. There are a couple more plans coming up you'll hear about.

These are very costly solutions to accommodate wind and solar, and I'm quite certain that when my colleague from Huron-Bruce arrives, she will give her 15 minutes of explaining what this has done in her riding.

To carry on with the story, spilling water is the cleanest, greenest, most reliable renewable form of energy. Spilling that water cost the province \$300 million last year, in allowing that water—that clean, green, reliable, renewable water—to spill through the run of rivers and over Niagara Falls without capturing it—\$300 million.

Our nuclear plants as well are not designed to accommodate variable wind generation. That means when the wind blows, we buy the power and we shut off one of the nuclear facilities, which we've done on many occasions. When you shut a nuclear plant down, much like a rocket launch sequence, it takes about two to three days to return to service. The head of the IESO commented not long ago that these shutdowns could indeed become regular occurrences, with the increasing frequency of periods where Ontario has surplus power.

The feed-in tariff program pays out massive subsidies for wind and solar contracts to produce power we don't need. This continues to drive up the cost of electricity. Costs rose 26% between 2008 and 2010. Last Tuesday, families opened their hydro bill to find a new shock, and that shock was in the bottom line of their very hydro bill, which is now projected to rise 46% by 2014.

Even the Premier knew what would happen next. While serving as energy critic in 1991, he stated, "I am not going out on much of a limb when I say there is a direct correlation between Hydro's rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario." And he went on to say, "As the rates go up, so will the rate of unemployment."

Well, as a result of skyrocketing energy prices, the Premier was absolutely correct—far-sighted, some may even say—because manufacturing plants, forestry mills and mineral processors closed or moved to where they found cheap power.

Let me review once again what exactly happens. We pay these FIT operators exorbitant fees to make power we don't need, and we make power we don't need at times we don't need it. Wind blows heavier in the evening. It's just a matter of science, where the ground is cool. It's a long process. Nonetheless, because we end up guaranteeing to take that wind power at times we don't need it, we spill \$300 million worth of water over Niagara Falls, we spend \$420 million to pay the States

and Quebec to buy our power cheaply, and we spend tens of millions of dollars every time we have to shut down a nuclear plant. It was about \$1 billion last year. It's another billion-dollar boondoggle, to use one of our words.

But let's see what this did to one specific company. Let's bring it to a real name here, now. I'm going to talk about Xstrata Copper in Timmins, Ontario—formerly of Timmins, Ontario. Xstrata Copper was the single largest user of power in all of Ontario. With the high cost of energy, and energy being the single largest input to their cost, they let 670 employees go and moved across the border into Quebec for cheap power—power that, freakishly, we paid Quebec to take from us. “Take it off our hands. We don't need it. We made too much. We can't store it. Take it off our hands and sell it to one of our own companies at a lower price so they'll leave Ontario.” It's a vicious, vicious circle. Not only did it cause 670 employees in Ontario to lose their jobs, and cause that company to move out of Ontario into Quebec; there were about 4,000 people, by the government's own admission, in the supply chain to Xstrata who are also now gone.

That, of course, has created a jobs crisis in Ontario. We lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in recent years, which, of course, has resulted in even lower demand for hydro. So now we manufacture—we create—even more power than we need, and because you can't store electricity, as I said, we end up paying the United States and Quebec to take that even greater amount of surplus power off our hands. We've paid them \$1.8 billion over the last six years, \$420 million in the first 10 months of 2011 alone.

You wonder, when will the cycle end? These industries are using that cheap power that we've given them to compete even harder and more successfully against our manufacturers, and as I mentioned, the downward spiral continues.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Stop the madness.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, it's hard to stop the madness, and I can tell you why: because this problem hasn't really sunk into the GTA yet, because there are no wind turbines in their own backyards. However, last week, the effect of wind turbines hit them in their front door, and that's when they opened their mailbox and saw that their hydro bill had skyrocketed again. So while it hasn't hit their backyard, it has hit their front door, and now the GTA is awakening to the fact that something's wrong with our hydro sector. A few more of those surprises in their hydro bills and the GTA folks will actually realize that this damage has caused them and their families great hardships.

Auditor General Jim McCarter delivered a scathing indictment of Dalton McGuinty's energy policy at the end of last year. He told us in there that the FIT program loses two to four manufacturing jobs for every green job that's created. He found that wind generators operate at 28% capacity and that wind output is out of phase with electricity demand. I've mentioned earlier that wind blows at night, when we don't need that extra power.

0920

Solar generators, he also told us, operate at just 13% capacity, and the FIT program, with its overly generous payments, will cost taxpayers \$4.4 billion more than the previous standard offer.

In 2010, wind and solar accounted for 1,700 megawatts, and the target for this government is for wind and solar to produce 10,700 megawatts by 2018. We're at 1,700 today; we're going to 10,700 in a few years, so the very problem that has sent our hydro bills skyrocketing and gutted our manufacturing sector is about to get six times bigger.

The Auditor General is not alone in his concerns and his realization that something is rotten in Denmark. Here are some of the recent worldwide headlines: “Arrivederci Solare! Italy Cuts Solar Subsidy;” “Dutch Pull Plug on Wind Subsidies;” “UK Solar Subsidies Slashed;” “Germany Slashes FIT;” and “Spain Halts Renewable Subsidies to Curb \$31-Billion Debt.”

Dr. Patrick Moore, the co-founder of Greenpeace, told a gathering of farmers in southwestern Ontario—your neck of the woods, Lisa—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My neck of the woods; that's right.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —that the wind power industry is “a destroyer of wealth and negative to the economy.” He said that, Rick, in the Chatham Daily News—your neck of the woods—on January 5, 2012. Let me repeat that. This is the co-founder of Greenpeace. He said the wind power industry is “a destroyer of wealth and negative to the economy.”

Mr. Rick Nicholls: He said that at Ridgetown college.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He went on to say at the Ridgetown college that wind farms are “ridiculously expensive and don't work half the time”—the co-founder of Greenpeace.

Now, let's bring it a little closer to this Legislature. George Smitherman, former Liberal energy minister and architect of the Green Energy Act, spoke out, calling for the prices paid for FIT contracts to be adjusted, and said perhaps municipalities should not have been cut out of the picture after all. Well, at the launch of the Green Energy Act he said, with much fanfare, how great this program was going to be and it could lead to a modest increase in electricity bills of about 1% annually.

He should repeat that to the 670 former workers at Xstrata Copper in Timmins and the 600,000 men and women who are out of work throughout Ontario, because we all know that the cost Ontarians paid for electricity went up an average of 9.8% last year. Without an immediate cancellation of the FIT program, look to that to continue again, as we saw last Tuesday. The total cost of power was 7.1 cents a kilowatt hour, up from 6.52 cents in 2010, and while the government keeps saying that wind is needed to replace coal, that's clearly not what's happening in Ontario. There's a reduction of coal use from 2010, but it's not being replaced by wind energy. That hole is being filled by other power sources.

Let's look carefully at the makeup of power in Ontario. First, in 2002, clean, green, reliable, renewable water power accounted for 25.5% of our power in Ontario. Today it accounts for 22.2%; that's down just over 3% of the power we use. Wind, coincidentally, accounts for 3% of our power. Clearly, wind has replaced water power in Ontario.

On the other hand, coal is down from accounting for 24.7% of our power in 2002—we'll thank our former colleague Elizabeth Witmer for that—to 2.7% of our power today, a drop in ranking of 22%. Now nuclear use is up 14%; gas is up 18%—a total of 22%. Coal has been replaced, dot for dot, by nuclear and gas. So I ask you to please quit the PR charade. Wind has not replaced coal in Ontario, and anybody who says that sounds foolish.

But now that the facts are out, it would be nice if we all tried to at least stick to the facts. One of the ugly facts is another phrase called "global adjustment." Look for those two words on your hydro bill. Simply put, global adjustment covers the spread between the market price and the guaranteed price paid to generators; as well, it pays for conservation programs. Speaker, this will be the hottest topic in business—for those businesses that survive—for the next couple of years. One North Bay manufacturer showed me that their global adjustment, which was virtually non-existent in 2009, is now \$1,700 a month. This is a small business in North Bay that makes the famous Sportspal canoes and others—\$1,700 a month. Their electricity bill is only \$1,400 a month, but their global adjustment, non-existent a couple of years ago, is now \$1,700 a month. This is going to cause more Ontario manufacturers to close up shop and move to cheaper locales, as we saw Xstrata Copper do.

In March of this year, the vice-president of PGI Fabrene Inc., John Spencer, was my guest here in the Legislature during question period. Fabrene is North Bay's largest private sector manufacturer, the last branch plant of a large US multinational. They have 250 employees and produce industrial fabrics. Now, just two years ago the global adjustment charged to Fabrene from North Bay Hydro was just about 5% of their bill. It was a big number, but not a number that caused their eyebrows to raise. Today, it is a staggering \$75,000 per month. Yes, that's \$1 million a year in global adjustment, an item that was not on their hydro bill only a few years ago.

I'm looking at some shocked faces here. Perhaps in all the spin we get in this Legislature, we've failed to realize that there is a thing now called global adjustment, and we have a company in North Bay that's paying \$1 million a year over the failed energy plan. When you go home to your ridings, ask your business community their single biggest concern right now. I'm betting you're going to hear it's hydro, and when you dig deeper with them you're going to hear those two words: global adjustment.

We haven't heard the end of it because, although we know that in its first year of existence employers paid \$700 million in global adjustments, the Auditor General in November told us that global adjustment is about to increase tenfold, to \$8.1 billion in 2014. You're shaking

your heads in disbelief. I can appreciate that. This is under the radar. One North Bay company, \$1 million, from zero, and the Auditor General has told us it is going to become 10 times bigger. Wake up. Quite simply, the failed energy plan is bankrupting businesses, costing Ontario thousands of jobs.

But, Speaker, the hits just keep on coming to Ontario families and businesses. We haven't even begun to talk about smart meters. The Independent Electricity System Operator has filed an application asking the Ontario Energy Board to implement a new charge to recover the cost of the \$250-million central computer system to store and process smart meter data. The IESO says it is seeking to recover costs for maintenance and operation of the meters through the end of 2017. This proves what our party has said all along: Smart meters are nothing more than tax machines, and they have to go.

0930

With this new charge your government wants to tack on, smart meters alone will be adding an additional \$4 a month to the average hydro bill. That's above and beyond what we saw last Tuesday. This is outrageous. The IESO request for a monthly smart meter charge is for 81 cents for eligible customers. That's the extra charge. On top of that, they need a buck and a half a month for the local utilities to start to charge to recover the initial smart meter installation, and 85 cents extra now to read a meter. In the city of North Bay, it used to cost 64 cents to read a meter the old way, when the meter reader would go to each household—64 cents a pop. Today it costs \$1.75 with the new electronic smart meter system. So compared to having someone manually read it, get ready for another 85 cents a month. And then you need 90 cents a bill to maintain the towers and controllers that are needed to read those smart meters. All in, we're in for another \$50 a year on everybody's hydro bill just for this extra little treat. That's a whole lot of money to spend on a system that the Environmental Commissioner says you haven't even found a way to track the effectiveness of yet. But it's only money, right?

For consumers on time-of-use pricing, the OEB says that the increase is about \$4, or 3.3% of the total monthly bill. The on-peak pricing was about 9 cents per kilowatt hour, up to 11.7 cents. For those on tiered pricing, a monthly increase of about \$5.80, or 5.1%, for a consumer using 800 kilowatts per month is expected.

The OEB is blaming this price increase on changing energy supply, meaning that FIT contracts are continuing to drive up energy costs. Our caucus believes energy policy should be based on creating an efficient supply of power at affordable prices, period. That's why we're calling for and will continue to call for an end to the unsustainable FIT program that is driving up energy bills.

Let's not forget the cancellation of the Oakville power plant and the cancelling, demolishing and relocating of the Mississauga power plant. These cancellations were nothing more than political seat savers and may cost the taxpayer or the ratepayers \$1 billion—maybe even \$1 billion apiece. That bill will come due perhaps this year,

followed by the bill for the new plant once the government figures out where to locate it. This comes at a time when industry experts are questioning the reliability of the GTA power grid itself.

The path this government is on will continue to be destructive to Ontario, period. By contrast, our party will end the unnecessary and overly rich subsidies to the few in the renewables industry. Be assured, Speaker, that our party will continue to focus on our plan to create reliable power with renewables at affordable prices. Over the course of this year, we'll be tabling policies that will put the taxpayers first again.

We've seen a recent retreat by the Minister of Energy to reduce FIT subsidies and give slight—ever so slight—input to municipalities—only if they're municipalities that are interested in wind and solar. However, to us this is an admission that the energy plan is indeed a failed social experiment. Reducing the subsidies will not solve the problem. The government will still be spilling water, venting steam and draining jobs while racking up hundreds of millions of dollars in losses. Our leader Tim Hudak's call for the immediate cancellation of the FIT program is the clear solution to kick-start job creation and attract new investment in Ontario. But the Liberals have rejected this.

Last month, the minister announced the consolidation of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority and claimed that it would save up to \$25 million a year. Again, this is tinkering on the edges of the file. As we all know, that will be a rounding fraction when it comes to the overall cost of Ontario's energy, if any savings are even realized at all. In fact, with the new rate hike that took effect last week, these savings, should they ever appear, would be erased in just two billing periods. This merger to create the OESO, the Ontario Electricity System Operator, simply will not realize any real savings for taxpayers or ratepayers.

It's quite interesting that the word "independent" was specifically removed in renaming the Ontario Electricity System Operator, because it can no longer be considered such. It no longer will be independent, given that the organization responsible for the scheduling of supply and market operations will now also be responsible for the procurement and management of generation contracts at the direction of the minister.

I'll give you a perfect example of political meddling that today we're paying through the teeth for. Originally, when Ontario's wind industry came online last decade, contracts said that wind generators only got paid for actual generation. The OPA's original FIT program guidelines maintained this. But sometime during the original FIT review process, the OPA received an order to do an about-face. Now FIT generators get paid on the power they could have produced, had there been no grid constraints. The conflict this legislation creates is that the system planner is also in charge of who gets the contracts to provide the power.

This government's inability to properly think this through has resulted in a very bad bill. Our party believes

that the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged but be scrapped altogether.

Let's take a look at how we got here. The OPA was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body, created by this government to manage Ontario's energy supply. Today, it's a 235-person permanent entity, where 87 people earn over \$100,000 and the CEO earns \$570,000. In just seven years, it has burned through over \$375 million in expenditures, and its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today. By shuffling bureaucrats down the hall and creating one super-agency, this move proves the government still doesn't recognize the severity of Ontario's debt crisis. The government has claimed it will save money but has yet to show us how it plans to do so.

This legislation also addresses how the minister is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs. However, it does not set out any time frames as to how often or when the minister is required to do this. In fact, will we ever actually see a long-term energy plan?

This bill not only fails to correct a serious problem—which is the continued opportunity for undue political influence to outweigh factual evidence when it comes to decisions regarding Ontario's future energy plans—but this actually achieves quite the opposite. It gives the minister even more directive powers and the ability to meddle in everyday energy policy, which many experts in the industry have decried as a major obstacle to achieving good, sound energy policy. Speaker, this is a step backwards. Section 5(3) of the bill states that "the board of directors shall take such steps as it considers advisable and appropriate" to separate the functions of its market and operations from its procurement and contract management opportunities. But in reality, this is unlikely to actually take place, given that this bill allows for the minister to provide directive to the OESO on energy plans, including those items found in subsection 25.30(3): procurement referrals; determination of competitive and non-competitive procurement processes; the direct procurement of contracts; and the pricing of contracts.

0940

It goes even further: Bill 75, if approved in its present form, will strip away the Ontario Energy Board's ability of render meaningful input into many areas of the energy system, including long-term planning. Under this, the minister would receive input from the OEB on any long-term energy plan they put forward, but the OEB would have no real teeth or mechanism available to force any changes.

This legislation would also take away the Ontario Energy Board's oversight of fees charged by the IESO. Again, this is just one more way Bill 75 strips away accountability and transparency.

But worst of all—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You mean it gets worse?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It gets worse. Worst of all, this legislation alters the role of the Ontario Energy Board and moves it away from consumer protection and, in-

stead, towards an advocacy role for the policies of the government, putting emphasis on renewables and conservation. Would the conservation programming not be best shifted to local distribution companies, who are in the best position to determine what initiatives will be most effective among their ratepayer base? Again, here is one more example of how this bill strips away the checks and balances that currently exist in the system to allow political considerations and influence to trump technical and factual evidence in the decision-making process. I think that's shameful.

You would think that was enough, but the legislation still doesn't stop there. It also removes the transparency regarding decisions and will foster the culture of secrecy that not only hangs like a cloud over the OPA but this government as a whole. The veil of secrecy surrounding the OPA is well known to anyone who has ever tried to deal with them. They have balked each and every time they've been asked to divulge costs associated with, first, the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville gas plant, and then the seat-saving cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant last September. No one knows what it will end up costing for our government to get out of these contracts. No one knows how much money was wasted as construction continued for nearly two months on the Mississauga plant last fall after the announced cancellation and where or how much it will cost to relocate that facility. They're named in a \$300-million lawsuit already, Speaker, likely only the first of many. There's no price too high to pay for political expedience as far as this government is concerned.

And if you want to talk about the culture of secrecy, what better example than the \$7-billion sole-sourced Samsung contract. The government likes to tout this when compiling its job-creation numbers, but in reality, and by Samsung's own admission, the \$7-billion contract is to create 900 jobs. But how can we entrust more power to the minister, given this government's track record?

Bill 75 is simply a piece of rushed legislation. The change it aims to achieve is like slapping paint on a rotten piece of wood. The minister would be best served by revisiting the government's other energy policies, which the Auditor General tells us will send electricity prices skyrocketing up 46% by 2015.

Last week, as I said, we saw hydro rates rise yet again in Ontario, another \$4 to \$6 a month on average, depending on your pricing plan. Now there's an application before the Ontario Energy Board that would hike costs even more to implement this government's smart meter scheme.

This legislation, Speaker, to merge the IESO and OPA: All it does is add costs and bureaucracy. This legislation won't do anything to reduce costs for ratepayers or taxpayers. All it does is consolidate even more power into the hands of the minister, promote the culture of secrecy this government is known for and allow for even more political interference in the technical decisions and fundamentals that should be driving energy policy in Ontario. Like this minister, Bill 75 fails to put consumers

and businesses first, and I urge members to vote against it.

Thank you, Speaker, and I'll turn the time over to the member from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My friend here, my colleague the MPP for Nipissing, has shared so many relevant points as to why Bill 75 just doesn't make sense at this time. I'm going to be speaking in support of our member from Nipissing's direction.

Since becoming an MPP seven months ago, I've spoken quite often in this House about the state of energy in Ontario. Just to point to one example, I have had so much support prior to and actually after I presented my private member's motion calling for a moratorium on further wind development until third party health and environmental studies have been completed. It was debated two months ago to this date and, Speaker, I can tell you, sadly enough, not much has changed except that more people and more communities are coming out against wind energy. We know first-hand and we respect the fact that we need renewable energy as part of our energy mix going forward, but we need to do it in a way that's respectful to communities and respectful to individuals, and it must make economic sense. Piling layers of bureaucracy together does not achieve this at all.

Let's talk about some of those individuals and communities in our province. In Powassan, residents were not informed about the wind project there, even though it has been under way for two years. Why the cloak of secrecy? We know why: because people do not need or want the high electricity bills that the Liberal plan is causing them to experience. They were shocked to find out that the clearing of land—again, these are the people in Powassan—was to make room for new turbines. The community has concerns. The municipality has concerns. But, again, because municipal input is not being allowed in the development of wind turbines in communities, they are effectively being shut out, and this wind project will be the largest in the history of that municipality.

Again, so many people across this province are standing up. There's a writer who has a regular column in the Guelph Mercury who is known as the urban farmer. He's also a communications professor at the University of Guelph. I was quite taken by the fact that he has taken a stand as well. He has called Liberal wind energy "the most divisive issue ever in rural Ontario." What does that say? It says that it is not working—"it" being the Green Energy Act. The Liberal government needs to stand up and tune in.

A quote from the Toronto Sun recently said, "McGuinty's Green Energy Act was far more draconian in taking away the rights of ordinary citizens to have any meaningful input into the location and size of industrial wind turbines and factories.

"The act eliminated the right of municipalities to any say in the planning process." They disenfranchised local residents. "Public consultation was reduced to tokenism, the appeal process gutted."

We could go off on a complete sidebar about the lack of public consultation that is being conducted on a variety of issues by this Liberal government, but, alas, we have to focus on green energy today and on Bill 75. But, again, I stress the point that with this Liberal government—a common thread through every ministry is the lack of public consultation.

Going back to Bill 75 and the outlook of our energy in Ontario, I have to say that companies have been misled by the McGuinty Liberals and their so-called green social policies, and guess what? Our government—the people of Ontario—is now being sued, and I'll talk about that in a moment. Who is going to pay for these lawsuits? It's going to be the taxpayer who's footing this bill. Yet again, the Liberals are passing off their ill actions and their ill-conceived notions back on to the taxpayer. It's totally unacceptable. Energy is treated like a social policy instead of the economic policy that it needs to be recognized for.

0950

There are so many opportunities to go around the world citing different examples of how green energy has taken a step backwards, yet Ontario, the Liberal government specifically, continues to turn a blind eye to that. It's interesting: As I said, I'm new to this wonderful historic House; I've been here seven months. But right from the get-go, I understand that we have a demand that is far below the supply of energy in this province. We have to recognize that there's more power coming from the Bruce nuclear station in my riding of Bruce county and the riding of Huron Bruce, to take a larger picture of that. Bruce Power is providing reliable, affordable energy for this entire province, and I dare say that under really good leadership, Bruce Power is meeting its business goals. I ask, is the Liberal government meeting their goals? I don't think so.

In terms of meeting business goals, I need to share with you good news. Within the next 24 hours, Bruce Power is going to be syncing unit 2 up to the Ontario grid. This is fantastic news. They're walking their talk; they're making things happen in an affordable, reliable way. And guess what? We also, in Ontario, can anticipate affordable power from gas-fired plants. This is good news, but there's a little bit of sadness to this as well, in the sense that we can't even find space for probably the cheapest and most renewable form of energy: water. We have to take a look at this Green Energy Act, as opposed to adding layers on top of layers, as has been proposed through Bill 75. We need to take a look and get back on track, address energy as an economic policy, as opposed to social idealism.

We have to listen to our Auditor General as well. The Auditor General just months ago said that we lost \$1.8 billion exporting surplus power to Quebec and the United States. Hydro bills are expected to rise another 46% by 2015. These timelines are concerning, and I say that as well because when the FIT review results were released just a few weeks ago, it was mentioned by the Minister of Energy that Ontario, the Liberal government specifically,

is going to meet its demand and its focus and focus goal of 10,700 megawatts by 2015, as opposed to 2018. This is concerning, because there were a lot of folks looking forward to participating in a renewable energy plan. But where is the government now? How are they helping those people address their business plans in being part of that renewable mix? I'm telling you, it's a worry, because when we take a look at the Liberals' long-term energy plan forecast, they omit the cost of inflation, transmitting electricity to the grid from wind and solar facilities, additional costs to the surplus export subsidies and backup generation. They've omitted all of this, yet they tell people who have invested their lifetime savings into renewable energy, because they were told it was the next best thing—and where are they now? They've omitted real costs that are going to continue to drive up electricity, yet, I have to point out to you, there's a huge gap here, because they are working with folks throughout Ontario who invested their life savings into solar, and they're calling these people who cannot connect their solar panels “constraints.” These people, known as constraints to the Liberal government, to me are known as ordinary folks who actually believed in the business plan and the proposal that the Liberal government had touted out there, and now they're losing so much. They're being told—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, absolutely right. They have been misled, because they were told, “Look, if you invest in solar, you're going to receive 80 cents a kilowatt.” Well, ladies and gentlemen, the public need to know that the Liberals have totally led these folks down a garden path, and it's not a pretty ending, because the fact of the matter is, those original contracts have expired. These poor people who have invested life savings—I know of one fellow from my riding who invested \$500,000. He anticipated and penciled out his business plan on a return based on 80 cents a kilowatt. Guess what? That contract conveniently has now expired and he's being told, “Don't worry. You can reapply, but you're going to have to reapply at 44 cents a kilowatt.”

How much credibility does the Liberal government have when they totally go against their word? It shouldn't be surprising to anyone, but it might be surprising to the Liberal government here, that there are lawsuits coming out of my riding from their solar constraints, because they have misled, and they have not held up their contractual terms. Again, as I said, they've led these poor people down a garden path that does not have a pretty ending.

We need to talk about my riding a little bit more. The riding of Huron–Bruce—I'm very proud to call it home—is host to some of the best prime agricultural land in this province. It's also known as Ontario's “west coast” because of its picturesque coastlines and thriving tourism sector. I would hate to see tourists no longer wanting to vacation in what I consider one of the most beautiful parts of this province because of a landscape that's been altered forever and paved under concrete.

The Liberal vision is very unique for my riding. Out of the 9,000 industrial wind turbines that have been proposed as the number needed to generate the 10,700 megawatts, out of those 10,000 turbines needed to realize that multitude of megawatts, 1,800 under the Liberal vision will find their way to Ontario's most prime agricultural land and Ontario's most beautiful west coast under the Liberal watch.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And it's absolutely shameful. The sad reality is, no one's had a voice in this exercise. No one has been able to stand up and say, "Yes, we're interested in this. Let's pursue it in an economic way that makes sense."

The sad reality is, municipal governments and farm organizations are now calling for the Liberal government to act in the best interests of its citizens and put a moratorium on wind and solar projects. As I said, I've had tremendous support for them. Their asks are very similar to my private member's motion that got voted down. Again, these folks are looking for proper health and economic studies to be done to determine the long-term ramifications on individuals, communities and our economy. We all, everyone in Ontario, have a vested interest in doing this right.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the National Farmers Union, the Perth dairy producer committee and over 80 municipalities have all taken a stand and asked the government to take a sober second look at what the Green Energy Act is doing to rural Ontario.

In terms of rural Ontario, we also boast of wonderful access. Some of that access is realized through airports, and that could be another whole sidebar conversation in terms how the Liberal government is imposing their industrial wind turbines and nobody has a say. A true example is cited just recently in the Collingwood area. Turbines are going to make it unsafe for pilots to enter that air zone—totally unacceptable, totally shameful. Where is the access for that airport to contribute and say, "Look, Liberal government, enough is enough. Let us have some say in this so that we can plan together."

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yeah, maybe that's why they're restricting the airspace, perhaps. Yes, maybe only the Ornge helicopters can land there, as suggested by my colleague from Renfrew.

But I can tell you as well that this issue is not isolated to Collingwood. The folks in Kincardine are very concerned. Their airport is proposed to be surrounded by 90 turbines. Again, Kincardine, Ontario's west coast, a huge area that generates tens of thousands of jobs: That whole area is going to be constrained. There will be another constraint under the Liberal watch as 90 turbines surround that Kincardine airport.

Ladies and gentlemen, this type of action is not acceptable. You know, when we think about addressing the electricity issue in this province, layering the Ontario Power Authority on top of the Independent Electricity

System Operator just doesn't make sense at all. We need to be focused on jobs. We need to be focused on righting this economy, as opposed to clouding the issue by piling layer of bureaucracy on top of layer of bureaucracy.

I just have to shake my head, because it's so frustrating that we're just not breaking through. There are a lot of reasonable people who have ideas on how to move forward in terms of renewable energy for Ontario, but sadly, it seems like the Liberal stake is in the sand and they're not swaying from it. Actually, some folks will suggest that after Ornge, the Green Energy Act is probably the next big scandal to be addressed by this province.

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I have to mention that this government's recent FIT review was a little bit of a misnomer, because it really didn't say much at all. It did not provide any relief for families who work hard every day only to come home, terrified to open their hydro bill. Ladies and gentlemen, in the winter I stood up and spoke to the fact that, "Thank goodness for United Way." United Way kept the lights and the heat on in so many homes in my riding of Huron-Bruce, and I really appreciate what they do. But sadly, now that winter has passed, my constituency offices in Kincardine and Blyth are being inundated with phone calls by people who are losing their hydro.

People need to wake up in the Liberal government and realize we can't afford this scheme any longer. They need to do the right thing. It's so frustrating, Madam Speaker. I have to stay focused on my notes or I just shake my head. It's really, really so sad.

I want to come back to the FIT review. The first line of the FIT review document states, "Since its launch in 2009, the FIT program has helped create certainty in Ontario's economy, attract new investment, spur jobs and economic benefits for communities, and support a healthier future for all Ontarians." Really? That is one of the first lines out of the FIT review. Really and truly, ladies and gentlemen, I have to ask the minister, how is that working out for him? Because I know from the folks I'm hearing from in my riding, truth be known, this statement is absolutely not true.

We need to focus on jobs and our economy. This Bill 75 does not make sense and we just can't support it.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to say that this whole hydro debacle has been going on for years. I think it all started in 1999 under a certain government at the time, when they deregulated hydro. That's when all the trouble started, when they got the middlemen in here.

I remember Stoney Creek hydro back even as far as Hurricane Hazel. We were one of the first hydros back online. We had the cheapest hydro in Ontario. Welland and Stoney Creek had the cheapest hydro in the whole province. We had excellent hydro; we had our own Stoney Creek hydro. We weren't involved in this—bigger is not better, folks. When we all deregulated this stuff and we all let these other people in, and now we're

doing Samsung, we're doing everyone else—believe me, folks, Niagara Falls has been there a long time. We had Niagara Falls; we had one of the best hydro providers in the world. And when this government at the time de-regulated, it was the worst thing you did to this province, and you guys continued it. I'll tell you right now, we've had nothing but escalating prices, escalating jobs, lots more CEOs. We had one guy, and one guy on our council, who handled hydro in Stoney Creek, and it ran efficiently. It was fantastic.

You go to London, England. They now have boroughs. They've gone back to the boroughs system.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Would you like to speak, John?

They've gone back to the boroughs system. They've got 100,000 people now. They went back from two million to 100,000. They went back to boroughs because smaller is better.

What we've done in this province is we've created a big corporate monster with all kinds of fingers in the pie, and that's why we're in trouble. Why don't we go back to the days when common sense ruled supreme in this province? It doesn't reign supreme in this province.

I can honestly tell you that I've watched this mess develop for the last 25 years. Where are we today? In a big debacle, a big mess. Who caused it?

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and contribute to the debate on Bill 75. Madam Speaker, what Bill 75 does is basically merge the two Ministry of Energy agencies: the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority. The Independent Electricity System Operator is responsible for the operation of our electricity system, and the OPA, or Ontario Power Authority, is responsible for the planning of our electricity system. So this merger or this amalgamation will bring these two agencies together and will create more coordination among the two agencies. Also, it will increase the efficiency and operation of these two agencies and it will eliminate overlaps, which do exist among these two agencies. Also, it will bring a more coordinated approach to the management and operation of the electricity system in Ontario. All of that will simplify the whole process for small and large consumers of electricity in the province of Ontario. As a result of all this amalgamation, the taxpayers are going to save about \$25 million.

The IESO—Independent Electricity System Operator—and OPA have been created by legislation of this House. That's why the amalgamation of the two agencies requires legislation of this House as well. That's what we are here today talking about, debating this bill, Madam Speaker. The IESO and OPA have brought an adviser who will help them to do amalgamation and the merger process.

There are some key features in this legislation, Madam Speaker. I'm just going to briefly—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege. First of all, I want to thank my colleagues from Nipissing and Huron–Bruce for the incredible work that they put in with regard to this particular project. We pride ourselves, the PC government, as being the wallet-watchers for Ontario families and businesses, and one of the things I've learned in life is that when you mess up, you fess up. And do you know what? This government has messed up, but on the other hand, rather than fess up and admit that they've made mistakes, they're now lowering payout rates for solar. To me, that's their backhanded way of saying, "We messed up, but we'll never come forward and really admit that."

We look further at this and we take a look at the impact of high energy costs and what that's creating. I'll tell you what it's creating: It's creating unemployment. We heard from my esteemed colleague from Nipissing how companies in his riding are in fact leaving Ontario, but they're leaving Ontario in the Chatham–Kent–Essex area as well. And do you know what? When companies leave, that creates unemployment and that puts a severe stress on the social assistance programs in that particular area. That, to me, is a huge concern.

The Liberals talk about dirty coal. All this subsidy that I'm hearing—to me, that's dirty money. That's what they're doing. They're paying out. They're paying off people. They've paid millions to have other areas take our excess energy; green energy, wind and solar used first so that nuclear must be released. Here's my concern with that: What's the impact on our nuclear power when, in fact, they have to use the solar and the wind first? Because to lower those generators and raise them back up again—what's the impact? That's going to cause stress. Then what's the overall impact and cost to our taxpayers?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to say, I had the pleasure of listening to the entire address of my colleagues from Nipissing and Huron–Bruce, and they got it right. The problem is, the folks that are on the governing side don't have it right, and every time we make a good, reasoned suggestion to this government, they dismiss it out of hand. Why? Because it doesn't fit with their governing plan, their narrative.

I like what my colleague said about the fact that they spill cheap, reliable, renewable water power, they vent steam at our nuclear plants and it drains jobs in the province of Ontario. I call that the spill, vent and drain plan of the Dalton McGuinty government.

At the end of the day, as my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex says, this energy plan costs jobs in the province of Ontario. As we cost jobs, the overall prosperity continues to sink. It is a terrible sinkhole that they have put us into with this so-called Green Energy Act. What it is is a farce. It is a system where a few benefit greatly financially—those that are on the receiving end of the subsidies, the Samsungs of the world, the big wind-

generating farms that are springing up all across Ontario that are being paid massive subsidies.

This government talks about being opposed to subsidies now—the biggest subsidy plan in the history of this province is going on under their watch: the green energy subsidy plan for wind development in the province of Ontario. It is one that has—there is no good end to it. We're talking today that there are 1,700 megawatts of wind. Their plan is to have 10,000. What is the price of electricity going to be when we get there and what will that mean to jobs in this province? Shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Two minutes to respond—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No, we've completed it.

The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank our members of the Legislature from Huron–Bruce, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Richmond Hill, Chatham–Kent–Essex and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their thoughtful comments.

It seems that all you have to do is shroud things in a wrapper called green and people want to believe you. People want to do the right thing, they want to believe the right thing, so let's tell them the facts from now on.

At the FIT review a few weeks ago and in this very Legislature just last week, it was stated that green energy accounts for only 5% of the increase in electricity bills. Yet in the Liberals' own 2010 fall economic statement, it reads, "Over the next five years, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%.... This increase will be due to two factors: upgrading and modernizing ... existing capacity in nuclear and natural gas ... (44%); and the investment in new clean, renewable energy ... (56%)."

They claim 5% when it's really 56%. They claim wind replaces coal when all it's done is replace clean, renewable water power; and on and on it goes. What can we possibly believe from the Liberal government when we can't seem to get them to admit that their failed energy scheme is bankrupting Ontario businesses, crippling our families and hurting our seniors?

We encourage all to vote against Bill 75. We encourage all of the members of the Legislature to consider abandoning the FIT program and the government's failed energy plan. Let's start with turning down Bill 75.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, who are here today at Queen's Park, and specifically my constituent Mr. Brad Drewery.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to follow up on the member opposite's introduction. I'd like to welcome my constituents and yours, the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, MEAO, represented by board member Denise Magi and the other MEAO board of directors. MEAO is a charitable organization which advocates on behalf of all those living with myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities. They're here for an awareness day event marking May 12 as the International Awareness Day for MEAO and these three chronic, debilitating diseases.

I'd also like to welcome representatives of the Environmental Health Association of Ontario and representatives of support groups in Toronto, north Toronto, Scarborough, York region and Mississauga, and representatives of all support groups from across the province who offer support for those living with these three illnesses.

I'd like to remind all members of the awareness event and reception being held here today by MEAO in committee rooms 228 and 230, to which all members are invited to attend any time after 11:30 today.

Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Mr. John O'Toole: That was an excellent minister's statement.

I'd like to welcome Jackie Forsey, Margaret Cartwright and Keith Deviney, who is president of MEAO. Welcome to Queen's Park, and we're all here to understand your ailments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a good statement, too.

The member from Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting, through you, unanimous consent to wear the myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities pins on this very special day in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been requested to wear the ribbons in acknowledgement of the day. Do we all agree? Agreed.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome a director from the Egg Farmers of Ontario, Vance Drain, a former reeve of the beautiful village of Tweed. I thank the egg farmers very much for a beautiful breakfast this morning.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I also would like to welcome Denise King from Mississauga–Erindale, my riding. She's a member of the MEAO delegation as well.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Lauren Cripps, who is a student with RNAO and who's taking in the proceedings today.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature this morning the parents of page Manak Mann: his mom and dad Jaspreet Mann, Amritpal Mann, and grandfather Surjit Mann, all from the wonderful riding of Brampton–Springdale.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Dianne McComb, who is a director

with the Ontario egg farmers and lives near Lucan, Ontario.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce—I think they're on their way here—Scott Graham, the chair of the Ontario egg farmers, as well as Harry Pelissero, their CEO and former member of the Legislative Assembly here in Ontario. I want to thank them for their “eggcellent” breakfast this morning.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to remind members that this is VE Day, as well as, in 1884, Harry S. Truman's birthday. We had the sunrise breakfast this morning in celebration of that event.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Ms. Taylor's ESL class from Bishop Strachan School in my riding of St. Paul's. They're here today at Queen's Park to learn more about government. I know I speak on behalf of all members when I wish your class a fantastic day here.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome the parents of page Jenny Peng, who are here: Hong Jin and Chun An Peng.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome Susan Monaco, a constituent. She's with the fibromyalgia group in Mississauga, and has been running the Mississauga chapter for 10 years. So welcome to everybody. I join my colleagues in welcoming all of you.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to, at this time, welcome Scott Helps from the Egg Farmers of Ontario to the Legislature this morning. They cooked us breakfast, and it was great—from the Egg Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'd like to introduce Mr. Roberto Ferruci—he's the owner-operator of Elliot's Not Here—whom I met this weekend while attending a trade show in Elliot Lake. It was a fantastic trade show. During this trade show, he sponsored a trip that was to be awarded. For my wife, who's watching this morning and not expecting this: Honey, start packing; we're going to Vegas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My understanding is, you need a chaperone.

I do want to make an introduction in the Speaker's gallery, but before I do that, I would remind all members that introductions has been set aside for time to introduce as many guests as possible, and if we could resist the temptation to turn it into more of a statement than an introduction, I would appreciate it. It has happened by all members from all parties. This is mostly just to try to confine the time to allow us to introduce all the wonderful guests that do join us.

Speaking of a wonderful guest, in the Speaker's gallery today we have the consul general of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Julang Pujianto. Please welcome the consul general. And a welcome to all the others who have not been introduced.

It is now time for oral questions. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me; sorry. I was trying to think of going to Vegas and I forgot I had to do something important.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, April 23, 2012, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Miller, rose on a point of privilege concerning a remark made by the Deputy Premier, Mr. Duncan, in response to a question placed by the member for Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, during the previous Thursday's question period about the Ornge file. Specifically, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka indicated that the minister had implied that he was not impartial in fulfilling his duties as Chair of Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which was looking into the file.

The minister's remark came several days after an April 2 Twitter message by the Premier's former social media coordinator which, according to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, impugned his character, damaged his reputation, sought to intimidate him, and inferred that he could not impartially perform his duties as Chair of the committee and interfered with his duties as Chair of that committee.

The member from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson, and the government House leader, Mr. Milloy, also spoke to this matter.

Having had the opportunity to review the relevant Hansard and the information in the notice provided by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the relevant procedural authorities, I am now prepared to rule on this matter.

The remarks by the Deputy Premier were made during an exchange on April 19 with the member from Newmarket–Aurora concerning whether the Premier, Deputy Premier and Kelly Mitchell of Pathway Group would be appearing before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Deputy Premier said the following:

“That motion that I referred to to call Mr. Mitchell to committee was in fact a government motion, and the Conservative Chair of the committee deferred dealing with it until next week. I don't want to offend the sensibilities of the Chair or the House. I won't use some language, but it appears as though they won't want him at committee. Will you agree here and now to unanimous consent to call him immediately?”

These remarks were unfortunate. Although not an outright accusation that the Chair of the public accounts committee was not acting impartially, they certainly were of a nature that such a listener could believe he or she was being invited to draw this conclusion. Had the remarks been clearly heard, I have no doubt they would have been found to be unparliamentary and be required to be withdrawn.

In the House, the ability of the Speaker to act in the interest of all members, to maintain order and decorum, and to protect the rights and privileges of all members is derived from an implicit trust in the Speaker's impartiality and neutrality in the chair and in all his other responsibilities. In many ways, the Chairs of the standing committees might rightly be considered the Speaker's

designates when they preside over a subset of members in a committee.

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This brings me to one of the arguments made by the government House leader when he responded to this point of privilege, to the effect that various protections against untoward reflections on a presiding officer are not available to the committee Chair because he or she is not a presiding officer in the same sense as the Speaker, Deputy Speaker or First, Second or Third Deputy Chairs of the committee of the whole House. I disagree. I already mentioned that the committee Chairs are in effect designates of the Speaker. As noted in *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*:

“The Chairperson performs a similar role in respect of chairing the committee that the Speaker does in chairing the House—calling on members to speak or ask questions, keeping order, ruling on disputed aspects of procedure and putting questions to the committee for formal decision.”

Committee Chairs are responsible to see that the standing orders of the House are observed in their committees to the extent applicable, just as the Speaker and his designates in the House must do. Like the Speaker, they have no vote except in the case of a tie and do not participate in debates of the committee.

The implication that it would somehow be acceptable to criticize or intimidate or obstruct a committee Chair because of the strict designation of the term “presiding officer” is erroneous, and I would not want this to remain uncorrected.

Like the Speaker, committee Chairs can only be most effective when their impartiality in the chair is assumed and unquestioned. It is simply not acceptable to make implications about the partiality of a person presiding over a parliamentary proceeding, not only because the person lacks the means to defend himself or herself, but more importantly because a formal course exists for such an assertion to be made, that is, by substantive motion in the affected venue, be it this Legislature or one of its committees.

Members who disagree with the decisions of, or who have lost confidence in, a committee Chair have procedural mechanisms at their disposal. If there is no case for using those mechanisms—and there is no case in the incident before me—they should strive to avoid couching or juxtaposing words in such a way as to call into question the neutrality of a member who has presiding responsibilities in the House or one of its committees. An accusation that a committee Chair is not impartial is serious and deserves to be treated as such, and not made in an ill-considered throwaway line in question period.

Nonetheless, I do believe that the Deputy Premier’s remarks were of exactly this type—something said in the heat and battle of what was a particularly raucous question period. Tempers were high, and so was some of the language. As I said, the remarks were unfortunate, and I do not excuse them, but I also do not believe they were premeditated by the Deputy Premier to undermine or im-

pugn the integrity and the reputation for impartiality that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka clearly enjoys among his peers in this House.

I do not find the Deputy Premier’s remarks give rise to a finding of prima facie breach of privilege, and again state my belief that had they been heard, the Deputy Premier would have been asked to withdraw as a matter of order. In fact, such a withdrawal is never too late.

I am concerned about the comment made on Twitter, a copy of which the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka provided to me. The tweet asks this question about the Chair of the public accounts committee: “Norm Miller, MPP, met Ornge top executives in 2010—what did he tell them? Can he still be an impartial Chair at public hearings?”

The member made a thought-provoking point about this by quoting the following from Maingot’s *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*:

“All interferences with members’ privileges of freedom of speech, such as editorials and other public comment, are not breaches of privilege even though they influence the conduct of the members in their parliamentary work.... But any attempt by improper means to influence or obstruct a member in his parliamentary work may constitute contempt. What constitutes an improper means of interfering with members’ parliamentary work is always a question depending on the facts of each case.”

This new age of robust and viral social media encourages spontaneous reactions and comment on whatever trend happens to have someone’s immediate attention. The intersection between ancient but still-valid parliamentary privileges, on one hand, and fair comment on the other, promises exponentially more crossings in the future than were possible even a few years ago. While in a proper case the opposite could be found, I am prepared in the present instance to say that this single tweet on Twitter, even if it was re-tweeted several times, does not rise to the level required for me to find it was an attempt to intimidate the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I therefore do not find that a prima facie case of breach of privilege or of contempt has been made out.

In closing, I will say that in this assembly, as in most parliamentary jurisdictions, there is a strong tradition of respect for the authority of those members who exercise presiding functions, be it in the House or its committees. The fact that an issue such as this one arises so infrequently is good evidence of this.

I thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Timmins–James Bay and the government House leader for speaking to this matter.

Mr. Norm Miller: I just wanted to thank you for your thoughtful ruling, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, this morning, papers across the globe continue to run headlines like “France and Greece Spur New Era of Uncertainty.” Yesterday the euro hit its lowest level against other major currencies in more than three months. As you know, Europe is our second-greatest trading partner in Ontario, after the States.

You’ve built your budget on some very precarious foundations of achieving a wage freeze in international and economic growth. Your own budget says that a 1% drop in economic growth will cost the plan \$800 million. Minister, you’ve booked into your plan \$6 billion in savings from achieving a pay freeze across the board. The credit rating agencies don’t argue with the targets you’ve set; they point out you don’t say how you’re going to get there. You’re the first finance minister since Floyd Laughren under the NDP to see a credit downgrade.

Minister, if you’re going to vote against a mandatory, legislated pay freeze, how the heck do you get to a \$6-billion savings, if you vote against a tool to do so?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are simply following—and the member opposite is right; we’ve booked \$6 billion over three years. It’s page 171 of the budget. He neglected to mention yesterday he could find \$2 billion, recognizing that it’s already taken out of the budget.

There are challenges, and yesterday the Minister of Health made an announcement that is a first step towards that. We are following a number of constitutional conventions as well as rulings to ensure, as the government moves to freezing wages, that we in fact are able to achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we achieve a wage freeze and hopefully, instead of voting against those things—as this party opposite has done—in the future, when called upon, they will support the government as we move back towards balance, instead of walking away from their responsibilities to the people—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the important question to ask the minister is—you’re the first finance minister to see a credit downgrade—this from Moody’s—since Floyd Laughren in the NDP days. What signal does it send to the credit rating agencies, to investors, that you’re opposing a mandatory public sector wage freeze that you’ve built your plan around?

Minister, here’s the problem: In your voluntary pay freeze approach, looking at the settlements that came about in December and November, there were 50 of them in the broader public service. Out of 50, there was only one that was zero; 49 were well above that. Your voluntary pay freeze has been a failure. The Auditor General and Mr. Drummond have called this approach into question, as have the credit rating agencies.

Why are you doubling down on a failed policy and why won’t you support our sensible and fair policy for an across-the-board, mandatory public sector pay freeze?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition’s plan won’t work. That’s why eight provinces running deficits have rejected the approach. His federal cousins in Ottawa did not introduce—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m going to ask for order.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: His federal cousins in Ottawa did not introduce a legislated wage freeze; they introduced a legislated increase of 1.5% after they had considerable negotiations with their bargaining partners.

Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has an obligation to pay attention to court rulings. We are doing that. We will and must achieve 0%; the Leader of the Opposition is right. We have built those numbers into the budget. We will do so respecting the Constitution, recognizing that no other jurisdiction in Canada has attempted what the Leader of the Opposition proposes because it won’t work.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, no other jurisdiction in Canada is in such a deep hole as the province of Ontario after nine years of your mismanagement. The worry is, it will become the Greece of Canada if we stay on this path, heading towards a \$30-billion deficit. That’s the combined deficits of all the other nine provinces times three. That’s the hole you’ve dug.

The courts allow for action in times of fiscal crisis, and when you’re heading towards a \$30-billion cliff, that’s a crisis. The time for action is now. You can’t kick this can down the road. This is reasonable, it is thoughtful and it is fair: a mandatory public sector wage freeze, not your voluntary wage freeze that digs the hole deeper.

Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you support the Ontario PC plan for a mandatory public sector wage freeze to save us \$2 billion annually?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. It won’t work. I’ll show what happened in British Columbia. When governments rush to an end point without going through consultations or negotiations, labour has recourse through the courts, and evidence shows that the courts will undo the government’s action.

The federal government is currently defending up to 11 court challenges involving its expenditure restraint law for the public service, as well as multiple court challenges over its imposition of settlements for Canada Post and Air Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, they had in fact engaged in negotiations prior to taking the action they took.

We have a Constitution. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We in this Legislature do have an obligation to move back to balance, as we have been doing aggressively. We can’t accept their proposal because it

won't work. It'll fail the people of Ontario, just as his leadership has failed his party.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Deputy Premier: Sir, your voluntary wage freeze has been an abject failure: 49 out of 50. It's time to try a new path, a different path.

Minister, you've signed—for example, one of the voluntary wage freezes was with the 1,200 workers at the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC. Your voluntary wage freeze resulted in 2% increases in 2012 and 2013 and 2.2% in 2014-15.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: He overachieved, my colleague says.

His voluntary wage freeze was an 8.4% increase, Speaker. It's unaffordable.

Let me ask you this: Does your current voluntary wage freeze apply to MPAC or are they off the hook? Is yours across the board for everyone or, if they've already got a good deal, you're just going to look the other way? How will you approach MPAC and those that have contracts?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition is selective in the information he provides to the House. Let me provide some additional information that he neglected to provide.

Between April 2010 and March 2012, the average rate of settlement in wages in the Ontario public sector was 1.5%. The average settlement in the Ontario private sector was 1.9%. The average settlement for Ontario municipalities was 2.3%. The average settlement in the federal public service was 1.7%.

We have moved to the next level. The Minister of Health yesterday announced some regulatory changes that will help us achieve what we need to achieve with medical doctors.

We will no doubt have recourse to this Legislature at some time, and I hope that the opposition, instead of being absent without leadership, will respond and, as he indicated, work with—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder, everyone: Please, when I say "thank you," that should be the end of your sentence.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, 49 out of 50 agreements saw significant wage increases compared to what's happening in the private sector and those on fixed incomes. You just said the others have a 1.5% increase. I remind you, your policy is zero. Perhaps the minister could explain what his definition of "freeze" exactly is.

Minister, freeze means "zero." It means "no more." It says to all of us in the public sector that we need to take on our share of the sacrifice that has happened in the private sector, that has happened with average families and those on fixed incomes, to say that a \$30-billion

deficit is too much. We need to move to balancing the books, paying down the debt and building a stronger, more prosperous province of Ontario.

Let me ask you this essential question, Minister: Do you believe in your heart that somebody working in the same job in the public sector should be paid the exact same wage and benefits, or do you believe, as you have done, that those in the public sector should get 46% increases that aren't affordable in the private sector?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to note that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not acceptable in the House.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to note that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition supported the Minister of Health's initiative with respect to medical doctors. That's a giant step forward from a party that has abdicated its responsibilities in this House over the course of the last several months.

I'd remind the member opposite, as I did in my response to his previous question, that in fact the average rate of settlement in the Ontario public and broader public sectors has been below that of the federal government, below that of the private sector.

There is more to do, Mr. Speaker. We've begun implementing our budget. We will likely have recourse to the House on some of these matters in the future. I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition's support on those matters as opposed to simply walking away from his responsibilities to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me point out some important facts to the minister: The total amount paid to public sector workers in Ontario has increased by 46% since 2003. That's way beyond what's happening in the private sector, families on fixed incomes, let alone the unemployed. You've given away pension benefits that those outside of the public sector could only dream of.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business points out that an equivalent worker in the public sector gets 27% more for wages, benefits and pensions than someone in the private sector.

There is an essential element of fairness that has gone awry, Minister. We believe that you need a healthy, thriving private sector than to drive investment in public services, an Ontario economy that's a leader in Canada and a government that says its first goal is to rein in spending, to balance the books and pay down the debt to build a stronger, more prosperous province of Ontario.

Step one: A mandatory public sector wage freeze to get us on that path that will save us \$2 billion a year. Will you support it, Minister?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We now read that that party was signing collective agreements that had a larger

percentage increase than ours. Here's what the Leader of the Opposition chose to do: He and his colleagues fired 15,000 teachers, they fired 6,200 nurses. No, Ontario doesn't want to go back to that.

Here's where we differ: Our policy is about protecting teachers in the classroom because every child is entitled to the best education possible. Our policy is about hiring, and we've hired 12,500 more nurses since we took office. We have shortened wait times to ensure that our parents and all of our families have access to the best quality health care.

Ontarians rejected them before. They will reject you again. We're protecting health, protecting education, moving back to balance and putting money where it belongs, in classrooms and hospitals as opposed to—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All of you, come to order.

New question.

1100

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. The Minister of Finance has talked a lot about his plans for a government fund to improve productivity and, more importantly, create jobs. Can I get his agreement that creating and protecting jobs has to be the number one priority for any government plan?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, here's what the record is: The Ontario film tax credit, a project supported by the province through tax credits, contributed \$1.26 billion to the economy last year, representing 30,000 jobs. Training tax credits: We provided \$216 million last year, creating some tens of thousands of jobs. The research and development tax credits, which are refundable, provide \$255 million each year. The Ontario research and development tax credit provides \$135 million each year; the Ontario resource tax credit, \$3 million each year; the Ontario small business deduction, \$1.3 billion per year; the Ontario tax credit for manufacturing and processing, \$110 million per year. That is tens of thousands of jobs, in fact, hundreds of thousands.

I look forward to the details—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —of her additional proposals—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —to build on our success, many initiatives of which she and her—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to admonish the Deputy Premier. When I say thank you, that is the end and I wish you to stop.

Supplementary?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, I don't need your help.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government has received a lot of advice about support for business in tough times. Some, including their expert panel led by Don Drummond, say it's time to shift the emphasis from job creation onto enhancing productivity.

Unfortunately, these are the same people who told us that corporate tax cuts were going to unleash a tidal wave of job creation and investment. Instead, businesses have sat on record profits, and over half a million people in this province are still looking for work. Does the minister agree that it's time for a new approach?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think the leader of the third party wants to be careful in quoting Mr. Drummond on these matters, because he in fact doesn't think her idea really merits serious consideration.

Now, we don't necessarily share that view, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet earlier this year with people at the Office of Management and Budget, looking at the Obama tax credit, which she has cited in this House and in other places, where they propose to give employers a 10% tax credit for any increases in wages, whether from new hires or wage increases for existing employees. They go on to look at this in terms of the credit being calculated by comparing a company's 2012 eligible wages, defined as old age, survivors', disability insurance wages and a variety of other things— with a cap of \$500,000 per employer.

There are a number of these initiatives that are part of our existing tax credit system. I look forward to hearing more from the leader of the third party about the specifics of how she would operationalize her proposal, which is seriously worthy of consideration.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the finance minister misinterpreted, so I'll just clarify: I proudly reject Don Drummond's idea, and I disagree with him wholeheartedly that jobs should not be the focus of any budget of this province.

Sometimes big problems need big solutions. Instead of sticking with the same old tactics, which we know aren't working, I think it's time for Ontario to try something new: a job creation tax credit, which would be funded without adding a nickel to the deficit and would create 50,000 new jobs. Will the minister agree that it's time to try some new ideas to create jobs in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I took the leader through a number of initiatives this government has taken over the last three years, many of which she voted against. You can't quote Don Drummond at the beginning and then at the end renounce him.

She has proposed a 10% refundable tax credit for new hires in the first year, to a maximum of \$5,000, claiming that that would create some 50,000 jobs. That is why we agreed with the NDP in our budget negotiations that the

jobs and prosperity council will examine their proposal and report back by February 1 next year.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, if I'm not mistaken, this is the beginning of my third question. Is that correct?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are correct.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Correct.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All right.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So my next question is actually to the Acting Premier. I ask him to actually review the Hansard when he looks through the comments I've made because, in fact, I never quoted Don Drummond in a positive way, and I just need him to make sure he knows that.

The government's job council is going to allocate about \$2 billion, apparently, in business support. This is what their budget says. They could use less than one eighth of that for a job creation tax credit which would create 50,000 much-needed well-paying jobs here in Ontario. And because the money is already allocated, it won't add any new costs to this budget. Will the minister support the NDP motion to reward job creators with targeted job creation tax credits?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The motion that the NDP put forward to the House is remarkably vague on detail, and I think we would have to understand more of those details before we can support that.

Their proposal does not create jobs without a cost to the treasury. In fact, we estimate that it could be up to \$250 million. That is not to suggest that it isn't worthy of consideration—pardon the double negative. It is, in fact, worthy of serious consideration, but we are going to have to look at the details more carefully, going beyond what was put into the NDP's campaign document that spoke of it creating 50,000 jobs, a maximum benefit of \$5,000 and not saying where the money comes from.

We have undertaken, through our negotiations—we referred this to the jobs and prosperity task force. I'm sure they'll give us advice as well as access to expert opinion on analyzing this and helping us determine the appropriate way to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My apologies to the leader of the third party. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you.

Governments are looking at ideas like this from all over the world, Speaker. President Obama recently said that new tax proposals should reward companies that choose to do the right thing by bringing jobs home and not tax breaks for companies that move jobs overseas. In these tough times, how can we justify handing public dollars to companies that aren't creating jobs while so many people are looking for work? Isn't it time for measures that support the actual job creators in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have those, and they've been working—some of them working quite well; some of them not as well as we'd like. I would remind her that we've also put forth a southwestern Ontario economic development fund. We have an eastern Ontario economic development fund, a northern Ontario heritage fund, all of which have been preserved in this.

We have taken over \$2 billion in business supports, put it into a fund, and we're now seeking the advice of a task force that will give us guidance as to how best to use that money. We will ask that growth panel to give us advice, Mr. Speaker, on the best use of those funds. We will certainly look at the proposals she has put forth. I would remind her that the kind of proposals that have been put forward by President Obama and others are already contained in many of our tax credits, many of the incentives available to businesses in Ontario, and that's why last month we created some 46,000 net new jobs.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the finance minister might want to talk about the months before last month, where thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs were lost in this province.

This afternoon, New Democrats are going to introduce our motion to create a job creation tax credit. For employers, the math is very simple: Create a job, get a tax credit. The better the job, the higher the tax credit.

The minister has tried a lot of ideas that simply aren't working. Is he willing to really try one for a change that works? Will he support our efforts to create a much-needed job creation tax credit in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've said yes to that, and what I would like to do is simply review the record, because what the Leader of the Opposition said about a month before last was factually incorrect. First of all: 46,000 full-time jobs in March, a total of 348,200 net new jobs from the low in May 2009, recovering all of the jobs lost. That wasn't achieved by Obama; it wasn't achieved in the UK; it was achieved right here in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud of our business community. That member and her party continually denigrate business and the financial services sector, the largest employer in the greater Toronto area, saying, "We don't like them. We want to tax them more," instead of building an environment that will allow them to continue to create the jobs they've been creating.

Let's talk about the facts. Our unemployment rate is now lower than the US. Our unemployment rate continues to go down. We have built the foundations of a strong future. We—

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

1110

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Martin Regg Cohn shed some light on why this government continues to obstruct the will of the Legislature and that of the public accounts committee. "Liberal insiders," he writes, "believe the Ornge scandal is ... fading fast from the radar."

Speaker, I want to assure Mr. Cohn, the Premier, the Minister of Health, the House leader and those Liberal insiders as well as Ontario's taxpayers that we have no intention of letting this scandal fade into anything but a full-fledged inquiry.

Last week, I asked the Premier to personally intervene to ensure that the request of the Legislature and the public accounts committee for broadened terms of reference would—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: I ask today, given the Premier's sentiments that he wants to get to the bottom of this, will the government agree to allow those terms of reference to be implemented?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the member is well aware that the public accounts committee, a standing committee of this Legislature, is seized with the Ornge matter. I have here the statistics. The committee has sat for 20 hours on this matter and has heard from 28 witnesses who have appeared so far. I also know that the committee is in the process of scheduling future witnesses to come forward. I have great confidence in the public accounts committee and the good work that they do.

I would also remind the honourable member that, when it comes to the Ornge file, we have had a thorough review by the Auditor General. The Ontario Provincial Police—it's unfortunate, but they are investigating the matter. We also have a piece of legislation in front of this House which, if passed at second reading, would also be going in front of committee.

There is a thorough review of Ornge that is taking place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it's very clear that the government House leader himself is part of that group of Liberal insiders who are hoping that this will fade off the radar.

It's very clear what the Premier's intention is. He said, "Our responsibility is to do everything we can to understand how it is that we let this thing get out from under us, and to make sure that it doesn't happen again." That is why the public accounts committee sent a motion to the government House leader asking him to broaden the terms of reference.

I ask the government House leader this. It's a very simple request. We are asking simply that the committee can meet at the will of the Chair. What is it that the

government House leader is afraid of? We are asking for one thing: Broaden the terms of reference. What is the government House leader hiding and who is he protecting? That's what we want to know.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: The public accounts committee is in the process of examining it. The public accounts committee has the tools that it needs in order to undertake the types of investigation that are needed. I would remind members, for example, that tomorrow, the public accounts committee is hearing from witness Mr. Rick Potter and has decided that they will take 2.5 hours in order to hear what comes forward. They have the tools that are needed.

The work they are doing is being complemented by the investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police, by the good work that was done by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, and also by a piece of legislation that's before this House which, if they didn't engage in these juvenile bell-ringing games, would actually make it through to a second reading vote and go in front of committee for further examination of the issue.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Nearly everyone in their lifetime will face or know someone affected by mental illness. The Mental Health Commission of Canada is releasing 100 recommendations aimed at putting mental health front and centre.

Here in this Legislature, an all-party select committee made 23 recommendations to improve mental health, but as we approach the recommended two-year review, this government has only moved on two of those 23 recommendations.

Can I please ask the minister to explain what is the delay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I first want to commend the Mental Health Commission of Canada for releasing this very important report. I think, across all parties, we now acknowledge that this is an issue that we have to face head-on. I'm actually very, very pleased to see that mental health is finally getting the attention that it deserves.

We have released our mental health and addictions strategy. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Minister of Education and myself are moving forward with the implementation of those important initiatives within our mental health and addictions strategy.

I was very pleased that the Minister of Education last weekend announced 600 new positions to work with kids in our schools, including 144 nurses. Speaker, we need to

get to kids early so that we can get them the help they need as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Recommendations on mental health are too important to be left on a shelf. That's true about today's federal report on mental health, but this is also true of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions' report. Eighteen months ago, members from all three parties wrote this about the urgent need for this government to act on mental health: "We are convinced that a radical transformation of mental health and addictions care is necessary if Ontarians are to get the care they need and deserve."

The time for action is long overdue. Why is the province dragging its feet on action on mental health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I completely reject the premise of the question. We are moving quite aggressively on this issue, including the implementation of our mental health and addictions strategy. Our focus is initially on kids, because we know that if we can get to kids early, we may be able to prevent a lifelong challenge related to mental health.

We have almost doubled our community supports in addictions and mental health, and our most recent budget actually focuses more on community supports. That's why we've had to say to our hospitals, "You're going to have to make do with no base funding increase." That's why we have said to doctors, "You're going to have to work with us to protect but not exceed past expenditures on physician compensation."

This budget reflects our commitment to get more supports to the people who need them sooner.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As we all know, aggregates are a key ingredient that goes into building all of our infrastructure, whether it's roads, whether it's bridges, whether it's hospitals—all of the infrastructure that Ontarians enjoy. We are blessed here in Ontario that we have a plentiful supply of aggregates.

However, a report called the State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario shows that rising demand and a decrease in supply of aggregates mean that there could be a significant depletion of this resource over the next 20 years.

Minister, I appreciate the need to increase the supply of aggregates to keep up with our growing demand for infrastructure. But on the other hand, we have to factor in the environmental cost of extracting this resource. That's why, Minister, I know that last year you committed to reviewing the Aggregate Resources Act. Can you let the members of this House know why we need to review this act?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Great question. I want to thank the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for raising this issue. Certainly, I want to assure the members of the House and all Ontarians that a review of the

Aggregate Resources Act by the all-party committee remains a real priority for our government. That's why we made a commitment to review it. That's why we brought a motion before the House and we're pleased that it's being discussed publicly.

The one thing that I think needs to be understood is that the demand for aggregates is greatest in southern Ontario, particularly in the greater Toronto area. Our close-to-market approach has meant that much of the extraction takes place in close proximity to the GTA. The result of that, in some circumstances, has been more land use conflicts, with a growing number of Ontarians concerned about the impact of aggregate extraction in their communities. So in reviewing the act, I believe that we can work to find a way to improve the way that we balance our need for aggregates with ensuring that we keep our water safe and protect our environment as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer that has offered us a better understanding of the need for a review and the challenges that face both our government and Ontarians.

Minister, I know that there are opportunities for the public to participate during committee hearings.

Interjections.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'm going to repeat this. Minister, I know there are opportunities for the public to participate during committee hearings. Invitations to the public were issued yesterday in various newspapers and online. I also understand that the all-party committee is encouraging anybody who's interested in attending these hearings to contact the head clerk.

Despite all of this transparency, it appears that there is some confusion on the consultation process. Can the minister elaborate on how interested parties can participate in committee hearings?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly, it's vitally important that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm requesting that we race to the top and not to the bottom. I do require and request that when I get quiet, you don't use it as an opportunity to interject again. I'm serious about my challenge.

Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to think that all members of the House recognize how important this review of the Aggregate Resources Act is. That's why we're encouraging anyone who wishes to take part in the committee hearings to do so. Obviously, if you're making public presentations or written submissions, and to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to participate—our government is also encouraging the committee to make full use of teleconferencing, video conferencing and web submissions, and I know that they're continuing to discuss other opportunities to do that.

By seeking advice and insight from our key stakeholders, the all-party committee does provide a fabulous

opportunity to ensure that we all have a say in the management of this vital resource. Certainly I'm looking forward to working with all parties in this House to get the review right. This is important—

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General and it concerns the operation of the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries. Yesterday in response to my question regarding the disclosure of financial and operational records of the group, a public trust and a charitable organization, you said, “[I]t’s my understanding that some arrangement has been made whereby their records will be made ... public—to the general public.” Minister, can you tell me when this arrangement was made and when we can expect these records to be released to the public?

Hon. John Gerretsen: It’s my understanding that there have been ongoing discussions between my ministry and the Ministry of Consumer Services with the Mount Pleasant Cemetery organization, as well as some of the people that have been writing in about it, to basically make their financial affairs more public. That’s what’s ongoing. As you and I know, this matter has been going on for the last 20 years. We’ve got correspondence from this group going right back to 1991, and there have been attempts since that time to make the whole operation more transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, there is no plan to make these records public. After six years of inquiry, this is a totally inadequate answer. And it’s really concerning because this is reminiscent of the Ornge scandal, where numerous red flags were raised by the opposition and the government did nothing but sit on its hands.

This public trust holds over \$1.3 billion in assets. It’s alleged to have generated millions of dollars in profits. Isn’t it strange that the Attorney General doesn’t know where a penny of those profits has gone? Why aren’t you concerned about this, Attorney General? You have every tool at our disposal to ask for these records to be produced. Why aren’t you?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the organization is not a crown corporation. It has never received any public funding at all, Speaker. It has not received any public funding at all from the government, that is. There are methods and ways in which the groups, if they’re not happy, how they can resolve this. They can take this matter before a judge, take it to court. That’s how civil disputes in this province are being resolved: by having both sides present their position before a judge, and then an adjudication will be made.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to confess to a little bit of frustration that every time a question is

asked, it’s almost as if, as soon as they stand up, you start yelling something. It is frustrating.

You may finish.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, I think I’ve said it many times before.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge is now warned.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I’ve said this many times before. There is a dispute going on between a group of people and the Mount Pleasant Cemetery people. No government dollars have ever been given to this organization, to the best of our knowledge. That’s what it is all about. There are ways in which this can be resolved if the group is unhappy with the answer that they receive from government.

The member knows that. She’s a lawyer in good standing. She knows how disputes are being—

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

I will remind this minister that when I say “thank you,” that’s the end of the answer.

New question?

CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The government has announced that it will be closing the Thistle-town Regional Centre, a facility that serves some of Ontario’s most vulnerable children—over 400 clients: children with autism, children with severe developmental challenges, children who suffer as a result of sexual abuse.

The minister said the services will be transferred to community agencies—agencies that are already stretched to their limits. Will the minister table a detailed plan showing where every service for these 400 Ontarians will be moving to?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. I want to, first of all, remind her that a lot has changed since the 1990s when her party also made the decision to close Thistle-town. In fact, since that time, we have invested significant funds in our community-based organizations to ensure that the capacity and the operations of these agencies are effective to the point where it’s well known and understood that the organizations and the entities that are best placed to provide responsive, comprehensive services close to home for individuals like those currently treated at Thistle-town—that the best place to do that is actually through our community-based agencies.

We’re at the very beginning of a two-year process of transferring the services from Thistle-town to these highly capable agencies. I would suggest to my member opposite that she, as I do, support these community-based agencies for the good work that they do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, many are rightfully asking how this government intends to deliver the services that Thistleton provides: Programs like SAFE-T, sexual abuse family education, treatment, which treats victims of sexual abuse. This is an internationally recognized program that is running at capacity.

Here's what one father said about the program's impact on his son, "Without Thistleton, I have no doubt his life would have been destroyed."

Now that Thistleton is scheduled to be closed, will the minister say exactly how this program will be delivered?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, Mr. Speaker, we're at the beginning of a two-year process of transferring services into the communities. There are 15 residential clients at Thistleton and each one of those clients has been contacted by the ministry. They will have individualized treatment plans to guarantee that they are transferred to services within the community that can accommodate them and provide the sort of services that they're used to and indeed are entitled to.

The many of the approximately 400 day patients will have completed their treatment plan prior to the two-year closure. Those who have not—we're already beginning to work with those families to ensure that the treatment they receive in the communities is not only efficient and responsive but exceptional, as is the treatment provided by our community-based agencies that work hard every day to ensure that those services are provided.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. More than seven in 10 Ontarians have entered into a wireless service contract in one form or another and many of them have complained about confusing language, extra charges and massive cancellation fees. Many consumers feel they're being taken advantage of and they're looking to this government to provide them some protection.

The federal government has been silent on this matter for years and has only recently acknowledged that they're willing to begin talking about this important issue.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is the Ministry of Consumer Services planning to help Ontario consumers get some fairness, some clarity and some relief from the cell shock they experience every month?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. I am pleased to be able to take this opportunity to talk about the newly introduced legislation, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, which, if passed, will further empower consumers and strengthen their confidence in the marketplace. Again, I take this opportunity to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for bringing this issue to the forefront with his two private member's bills dealing with wireless agreements, which provided the foundation for this new government bill.

1130

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has left a vacuum, and we are taking strong action to protect Ontario's consumers. Our legislation, if passed, will provide consumers some relief from cell shock by ensuring that cancellation fees are capped, contracts are written in clear language and advertisements include all-in pricing. It will also require consumers to consent for changes to be made to their agreements and for these agreements to be written in clear language.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for clearing up how this bill will help all consumers in Ontario. However, Minister, there are some concerns out there with regard to federal jurisdiction and how this bill may add extra charges to consumers as cellphone service providers adapt to these new legislative requirements. We all know telecommunications falls under federal jurisdiction, as governed by the CRTC. However, the CRTC has been dragging their feet in this area and have only recently made any effort to address the concern of consumers.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the Minister of Consumer Services please share with the House how this bill will bring fairness to consumers and how it will not in fact add any extra charges to their monthly wireless bills?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Again, I thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It is certainly a lack of action from the federal government and consumer concerns that have led to the strong action that the Ontario government has taken with this bill to further protect Ontario's consumers.

I would note that the provisions of this legislation, if it is passed, fall within provincial jurisdiction, as it focuses on contracts. Contracts are most certainly within provincial jurisdiction. We have only to look to Quebec, who enacted similar legislation last year with respect to the issue of added costs. Our legislation is very much aligned to the Quebec legislation. It has been in place for approximately one year, and I am pleased to report that, to my knowledge, there has not been any increase in cost to consumers.

With regard to the CRTC, it is encouraging to hear that they are listening to consumers and have signalled their intent to hold consultations on the state of the wireless industry in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

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

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Education. It seems you and your government got into a little food fight with some students in Brampton. They're angry that you took away their choice. They're very insulted that you've taken away their responsibility. They say, "Ironically, the only health benefit to this policy that we see is the 1.5-kilometre walk to McDonald's." Also ironic is the \$700,000 that is being lost in revenues

to promote healthy lifestyles. Then add the minister's mixed messages that she makes that undermine her arguments to defend the government. Yesterday, she said there could be dispensation from the guidelines on certain days for certain activities.

Is this minister saying that pizza is allowed to be sold on Tuesday but not allowed to be sold on Wednesday? Is Tuesday's pizza healthier than Wednesday's? Or do you just think it's your government's job to tell students when and what to eat?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know we're doing something right in our schools when we're talking about pizza in question period.

We know that our kids go to school every single day to learn, to build their future, to learn how to read and write, and we should be so proud of what is happening in Ontario schools. I'm also proud of students who want to advocate, who want to talk about what's happening in their school and be part of building that culture and climate, and I welcome an opportunity to meet with the students.

But our kids deserve the best start. The member opposite is a mom as well. I know how hard I work to make a healthy lunch every day, and we know better. When we were in school, many of us ate French fries and gravy for lunch, and we know better than that. Let's build a good education system, and let's make sure our children's stomachs help their minds so that they can learn and grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister just told all those kids in Brampton that the government knows better. She should listen to those students in Brampton. They're not opposed to a healthy lifestyle or health promotion. They are opposed to choice suppression. They are using their mind; too bad that government left it at the door.

You've taken their gum, you've taken their Gatorade, but you sure as hell haven't taken their gumption away from them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

In the video Our Future: Student Choice Across Ontario, a student damns this government. He says, and I quote—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They may want to listen to this. He said, "We are told what to do. This is not the Ontario"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The student says, "We are told what to do. This is not the Ontario that I grew up in. This is not the Ontario I believe in."

Minister, the social media generation believes you've lost touch. You're taking away their personal choice and their personal responsibility. That's not Ontario's way. It's a hashtag fail. Will you listen to the students—

Interjections.

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

I want to take a moment to thank those members who have decided to sit there peacefully and not interject in the way it's been happening in the last little bit.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need any other interjections when I get quiet.

Complete.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you, Speaker. This is the Legislature of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West is warned.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This isn't a joke, Speaker. Research tells us that healthy food is important for students' learning. At the heart of everything that we do in Ontario's education system is making sure that our students can learn and grow.

Speaker, I'm not going to take lessons from the PC Party about what our priorities should be in education. They fired teachers. They had a total disregard for what our students needed to achieve. When we took office, only 68% of our students were achieving, and now our results are 82%. We're doing something right in our schools. We need to make healthy choices, the right choices. We need to make sure that our kids can learn.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Over the last decade, condos have become the de facto entry point to home ownership. Today there are over 525,000 condo units in Ontario and over one million condo dwellers, yet the Condominium Act has not seen a single change in the last 14 years.

My office receives calls from across the province from condo owners who have nowhere else to go when dealing with bad construction, conflicts with developers, unlicensed property managers, problems with the new home warranty and more. Consumer protection is completely missing. When will the minister and this government start listening to the people of Ontario and give condo owners the consumer protection they desperately deserve?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: That is certainly an important issue for the government of the province of Ontario, and the Premier has made it clear that we are going to be reviewing that and it is, in fact, a priority for this government.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that everyone here is well aware that the condominium marketplace has exploded over the last decade and there are many important issues that we do have to address with respect to the many issues that have evolved. That is why ministry staff are currently analyzing a number of issues in preparation for the review of the act. We will review the act with stakeholders and partners such as the Canadian Condominium Institute and the Association of Condominium Managers

of Ontario, owners, builders, renters, condo managers, other ministries and the legal community. We will build on information that we have already received and we will continue to review the act.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In April, the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville asked for the creation of a dispute resolution mechanism for condo owners. I'm happy to let that MPP and the rest of the government bench know that my Bill 72 includes just such a mechanism: the condo review board. Unlike the current court system, my proposed condo review board would solve disputes between owners, boards, property managers and developers quickly and affordably.

On May 10, I will try again, for the fourth time, with Bill 72 and I hope the Premier's commitment here is going to show itself. Will the government support Bill 72 in second reading, and will they support hearings so that condo owners can finally have a chance to voice their concerns?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Again, Mr. Speaker, I will say that the government of Ontario is committed to the review of the act. There are many issues which have evolved with respect to the many different players who are involved in the condominium sector. Our government is committed to listening to all the different sectors, because there are so many various issues that are involved in the condominium review, and the explosion of the condominium industry over the last decade has really created a lot of new information and new issues that we really have to look at.

We continue to review the act with stakeholders and partners and all the various players who are involved in the sector, because we want to ensure that at the end, we will find the legislation—

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

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In the previous Parliament, I had the privilege of chairing the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, with some great members from the other side as well. This committee determined that we all need to talk about this important issue. We need to talk about it in our families, in our communities, throughout the province. We also need to take strong action and give people with mental health challenges the support they need.

We've made some progress in awareness and stigma reduction, but there's a lot more to do. It's a shared responsibility, I think, of government, community partners and the private sector alike to help create better outcomes for those who are struggling with mental illness.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Could he outline to the House what initiatives are under way in order to help strengthen Ontario's mental health system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to begin by thanking the member from Oakville not only for this question but for his hard work, dedication, commitment and advocacy on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be leading Ontario's comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. The first three years of the strategy, as we all know, focus on children and youth. I have to admit, this statistic even surprised me, as a medical doctor: We know that 70% of mental health challenges actually begin in childhood or in adolescence. That's why we're investing more. New investments started last year and will total \$257 million over the next three years.

But mental health is not a problem that we can solve alone. We need all our partners working hand in hand with us across this province. These partners include agencies, umbrella organizations and advocates, clinicians, workers and support workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. I think all members would agree that it's a good thing we've placed the focus on assuring that patients with mental health disease receive the treatment they require, and that's even more so when they're a child.

That said, Speaker, it's even clearer today, during mental health week, that no two cases are the same and that more research is needed to help find the best methods for treating patients and ensuring positive outcomes. When medications and drugs are used during the course of treatment, that's even more important.

Would the minister please elaborate on any new research projects dedicated to finding effective treatments for people—and that includes children—within our mental health system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government's very proud of our success in supporting research in mental health, and particularly the work being completed at CAMH. Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to announce a collaboration between Larry and Judy Tanenbaum, our government and CAMH on the \$19-million Tanenbaum Centre for Pharmacogenetics.

We know the best treatment plans need to take into consideration the specific needs of the patient. By using pharmacogenetics and genetic testing, CAMH will be able to map a specific course of treatment that will eliminate dangerous side effects, improve patient outcomes and save millions of dollars on prescription drugs that are ineffective and often harmful. Ontario is proud to have contributed \$7 million to what is really a game-changing project.

Ontario has become a hotbed of research. This year alone, our ministry will invest \$275 million in research. From 2003 to today, we've invested double what the previous government invested.

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Don Drummond, your hand-picked economist, said in his report that “the government should make public the current and prospective financial health of public sector pension plans.” Not only have you failed to release this information, but your budget bill also fails to disclose this information. As the Minister of Finance, you know that billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities are jeopardizing Ontario’s public sector pensions. Why will you not release this information and share the truth with pension holders? What is the McGuinty government trying to hide?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: For the first time, we published that in the budget itself. We’ve also put out a note on a 60-day consultation. We dealt with the largest jointly sponsored pension plans on that. We spoke also in one of the longest narratives on pensions about the broader public sector. We’ve begun the consultation that we undertook. I expect the results of that to be done fairly shortly. You did vote against those initiatives, I would remind you, which are designed to do that.

My hope is that as the recommendations come back—and we did spell out a number of the specific undertakings around the funding of multi-employer pension plans in the broader public sector, around jointly sponsored plans in the public sector—I hope you’ll support the changes we’ve proposed in the budget. I would refer you to the budget to see, where it was based on the last valuation dates, what the state of those precise pensions is. That’s the first time that’s ever—

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Back to the Deputy Premier: With your failed track record of fiscal management, no wonder Ontarians are worried about the security of their pensions. Ontario’s public sector pension plans are short billions of dollars. Who bears the financial responsibility for funding these pension shortfalls? As Don Drummond said, there is considerable confusion on this issue.

So I ask the Deputy Premier, who is responsible for funding deficits of public sector pensions, or can we expect you to take the same wait-and-see-and-downgrade approach you took with the provincial deficit?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That’s very clearly outlined in the budget. I’d refer the member. It’s unfortunate the Tories still haven’t read the budget.

It depends. First of all, on jointly sponsored plans, we are half-responsible. We’ve proposed an amendment that would make the first recourse to be a reduction of benefits as opposed to an increase in contributions. You voted against that initiative, which is unfortunate.

On single-employer plans in the broader public sector, the employees and the employer are. We are therefore indirectly responsible because, in the case of some of these pensions, a much greater percentage is borne by the employer than by the employee. We’ve proposed to deal with that.

Obviously, you haven’t read the budget. I’d suggest you read it first. I look forward to your support for the initiatives we’ve brought forward.

MINISTER’S COMMENTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we’ve been waiting patiently for an hour since your ruling about the Deputy Premier’s maligning the reputation of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

You suggested that perhaps the member should withdraw his comments and apologize. I’d like to give the member the opportunity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s not helpful, the comments afterwards. That’s not a point of order. Members always have an opportunity to correct the record.

The Deputy Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw those comments, based on your advice, with my apologies to the Chair and to the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for doing so.

There are no deferred votes.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I wanted to welcome to Queen’s Park residents from York South–Weston. They are guests from Syme 55+ Centre, a non-profit community agency that does a lot of good work in York South–Weston. Today, visiting Queen’s Park, we have the president, Audrey Clark, and Violet Sandler, together with Doreen Fitzsimmons, Bernice Dowell and Nancy Rychel. Welcome to our Legislature.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m not sure if I introduced these people, but at the risk of doing it twice—Jackie Forsey, Marg Cartwright, and Keith Deviney, the president of MEAO. I’ll be making a statement on it later. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests to Queen’s Park.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. John O’Toole: I want to remind members that May 12 is the International Awareness Day for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, Fibromyalgia and Multiple Chemical

Sensitivities—difficult to say and very difficult to live with. An estimated 568,000 Ontarians suffer from these conditions. Representatives from the MEAO have joined us here today for awareness events, and it's a privilege to meet, speak with and listen to them.

I'd like to welcome, as I said, Jackie Forsey and Marg Cartwright, from my riding, with this group—and other groups across the province.

The association is to be commended for its success in advocating for the rights of people with these disabilities. The association promotes access to services such as disability benefits and home care, as well as an understanding of how these illnesses affect patients attending school and indeed in the workplace. They also recognize the importance of medical diagnosis, treatment and research.

I'd like to thank them and tell them that we are here to listen and serve you. All best wishes in your campaign.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure today to rise to congratulate the Windsor owner of the 138th running of the Kentucky Derby—Paul Reddam owns I'll Have Another, which this year came first in the heat and pulled away, in the final furlong, on Saturday, to win the Kentucky Derby. Jockey Mario Gutierrez was riding in his first derby and guided the three-year-old colt ahead of Bob Baffert's Bodemeister and a late-closing Dullahan to win on a fast track.

Reddam grew up on Cousineau Road in Windsor, and got hooked on racing by watching the standardbreds at Windsor Raceway, and is also the president of CashCall, a financial lending company.

This is particularly of interest because this is a gentleman who got his start, who found a passion in horse racing, and ended up winning the Kentucky Derby this year.

Now that industry, of course, with the decision from the Liberal government to eliminate the slots revenue-sharing program at Windsor Raceway and other raceways across Ontario—jeopardizes this from ever happening again. Who will want to invest in this industry if there's no financial future at the end?

I want to congratulate Mr. Reddam and thank him very much for his passionate involvement in the industry, and wish him best of luck going forward.

EGG FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to point out that a significant number of members of this House, according to my personal observation, were privileged to begin this day with a nutritious, protein-rich, vitamin-packed and downright delicious breakfast, thanks to the Egg Farmers of Ontario. I believe you, Mr. Speaker, know what I'm talking about.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I'm happy to thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for coming to Queen's

Park this morning for their 14th annual breakfast. I'm proud that Ontario is home to some of the world's most delicious, healthy and nutritious eggs, and I'm proud to support Ontario's egg farmers.

Eggs are a great choice for a healthy, active lifestyle. They are low in calories, high in protein and contain all nine essential amino acids.

We also know that supply management plays an important role in the success of the industry. It brings stability, provides opportunities for growth, and contributes to a strong economy, which is why our government is a strong, unwavering supporter of this system. All Ontarians benefit in turn because eggs are an important part of the agri-food industry and a significant contributor to the province's economy.

I encourage all members to take the opportunity to speak to an egg farmer today and learn more about this thriving industry. From someone who grew up on the farm, I'm pleased to say that there's not a bad egg among them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will permit heckling in that case.

BRUCE TRAIL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Bruce Trail, Canada's oldest footpath, that encompasses 885 kilometres and an additional 300 kilometres of side trails from the Bruce Peninsula to Niagara Falls.

I'm particularly proud of the trails located throughout Dufferin-Caledon—including the Toronto Bruce Trail Club, headed by Peter Leeney; the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club, headed by Jean Kerins; and the Dufferin Hi-Land Bruce Trail Club, headed by new president Larry Haskell.

Each of these volunteer clubs represents the people who work hard to maintain the trails for all of us to enjoy. Since 1952, volunteers have developed handshake agreements with landowners to build, develop, maintain and enhance the Bruce Trail. These are the individuals who help ensure all Ontarians have access to the Niagara Escarpment.

A UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, the escarpment is home to irreplaceable natural spaces, endangered species and the Bruce Trail.

This year, Bruce Trail clubs will be hosting many celebratory events to mark its 50th anniversary. Recently I was pleased to participate in a fundraiser to purchase a new section of the trail being developed by the conservancy in the township of Mono called Splitrock Narrows.

It is exciting to see the trail grow and have a chance to explore new areas. I would encourage everyone to take the time this year and find an occasion to visit the Bruce Trail and celebrate its 50th anniversary.

OOSTER HOUSE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I was pleased recently to welcome Minister of Community and Social Services John Milloy to Guelph for the grand opening of a new respite home for adults with developmental delays.

This initiative is the result of creative collaboration between Community Living Guelph Wellington and Hopewell Children's Homes, with financial support from the province of Ontario.

The new six-bed respite group home, called Ooster House, will provide respite for individuals 18 years and older, thereby assisting families to maintain their adult child at home. It is expected that up to 50 families will eventually be able to receive respite anywhere from one day to several weeks. Hopewell's Stephanie Home already provides respite services for 62 children and youth, many of whom are diagnosed with autism.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is providing \$300,000 in urgent-need funding to support the operation of the home as well as providing one-time funding of \$150,000 in capital support.

This new respite home will make a real difference in the lives of many adults with a developmental disability and their families. I am delighted that the home will be called Ooster House in recognition of John and Joanne Oosterhuis, who founded Hopewell Homes, and their extraordinary commitment to serving people in our community with developmental disabilities.

UNION CERTIFICATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you once again for that beautiful introduction, Speaker.

We do not have to look long or far to find abusive examples of the card-based certification policies which some parties here support. We've seen it used to completely undermine employees' freedom of association, a basic human right guaranteed by our charter.

Take, for example, two carpenters who worked for the city of Hamilton. They showed up to work one Saturday and used card-based certification to unionize all construction and carpentry work performed for or by the city of Hamilton. The result was that, of 260 registered contractors with the city of Hamilton, only 17 became eligible after that. That's the tyranny of the 6.5%.

Card-based certification is, in short, a method by which a small number of workers can coerce, force, browbeat and menace a larger number of workers into joining a union. It is a fundamental denial of their basic human right to freedom of association.

1510

This unfairness is why I'm tabling legislation this afternoon to eliminate card-based certification from the law books of Ontario. It's fitting that on the birthday of Nobel Prize-winning economist F. A. Hayek, I'll end the statement with his wise words: "If we wish to preserve a

free society, it is essential that we recognize that the desirability of a particular object is not sufficient justification for the use of coercion."

HEALTHY EATING

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise in this House, and in a few minutes I will be introducing a private member's bill called Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating.

The bill is very simple. It asks restaurants that have a profit of more than \$5 million and have at least five sites in Ontario to do three things. The first one: Put the calories beside the price so you know how many calories you're buying. If you're buying a Big Mac, \$2.99, 640 calories. The second thing: If it is high in sodium, we will add a flag to that menu so that we flag foods that are high in sodium. The third thing is that it will make sure that every one of those restaurants has a brochure available with the full nutritional content of every item on the menu. That's it, that's all, but a small bill like this can have a great influence on the health of the people.

Nutrition-related health risks are high, but they are avoidable. In this bill, I have the support of the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Stroke Network, the Sport Matters group; I have the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, including Rosana Pellizzari, who is the medical officer of health in Peterborough, and Dr. McKeown, who's the medical officer of health in Toronto. We have the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Ontario Medical Association, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Prevent Cancer Now, Disabled Women's Network Ontario and the dietitian association.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. Joe Dickson: The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, known as the MEAO, is a registered Ontario charity and a volunteer-operated organization which was founded in 1990. MEAO is a place of information, support, awareness and education for people living with myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities.

There are over 500,000 people in Ontario, as per the Canadian Community Health Survey of 2010, living with one or more of these chronic, debilitating and often disabling illnesses. The symptoms of these illnesses often overlap and are complicated. Patients with one or more of these illnesses often despair for lack of treatment options.

Funding for these illnesses is almost non-existent, and the MEAO is actively advocating to help secure the funds needed for diagnosis, treatment and community support.

The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario advocates on behalf of all Ontarians who have

one or more of myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities. May 12 is known as awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities.

Today, on May 8, 2012, they are having an awareness event at Queen's Park once again to advocate on behalf of Ontarians who have these illnesses. Funds must become available soon in order to open treatment centres, provide the urgently needed treatment and provide more education.

J.L. JORDAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to speak about a very moving event I attended over the weekend at J.L. Jordan Catholic School in Brockville. Billed as Extreme Saturday, the event saw dozens of parents, students, staff and community volunteers come together for a final daylong effort to complete their schoolyard revitalization project.

It's an amazing makeover. However, the day's highlight was clearly the dedication of the project to four community heroes prior to the ribbon-cutting. These heroes were chosen to represent the four points on the compass J.L. Jordan strives to instil in its students to guide them in making the right choices on life's journey.

Three of the heroes were honoured posthumously: Corporal Randy Payne, who was killed in Afghanistan on April 22, 2006; Andrew Moffitt, who was stabbed to death while coming to the aid of a friend in 1998; Warrant Officer Class 1 Robert Moulton, who, prior to losing his life when his plane was shot down over Holland on May 5, 1943, piloted the doomed aircraft away from a village, saving countless lives.

The fourth hero is RCMP Corporal Laurie White, a former J.L. Jordan student, who was injured in the line of duty and is the only active duty officer to return to work with a prosthetic leg.

It was humbling to be part of the dedication ceremony with the families of these heroes and hear about these incredible exploits. I can't think of four better role models for young students to emulate, and I want to commend everyone involved with the project for organizing such an unforgettable day. Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for Private Members' Public Business, such that Mr. Chudleigh assumes ballot item number 44 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 46.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 8, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS ACT (CERTIFICATION OF TRADE UNIONS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS (ACCREDITATION DES SYNDICATS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to increase the rights of members of trade unions with respect to the certification of trade unions / *Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour accroître les droits des membres des syndicats relativement à l'accréditation des syndicats.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. From the explanatory note—you'll like this; it's very short.

Defending Employees' Rights Act (Certification of Trade Unions): "The bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to prohibit the Ontario Labour Relations Board from certifying a trade union as the bargaining agent of the employees in a bargaining unit unless a representation vote is held among the employees."

HEALTHY DECISIONS FOR HEALTHY EATING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 FAVORISANT DES CHOIX SAINS POUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINTE

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act to require a food service premise to provide nutritional information / *Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé pour obliger les lieux de restauration à indiquer l'information nutritionnelle.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

1520

M^{me} France Gélinas: Here's the explanatory note. "The bill amends the Health Protection and Promotion Act to require all persons who own or operate a food service premise that is part of a chain of food service premises with a minimum of five locations in Ontario and a gross annual revenue of over \$5 million to do the following:

"(1) Display the number of calories contained in the food and drink items that are sold or served for immediate consumption....

"(2) Make available brochures that provide nutritional information for the food and drinks items sold....

"(3) Indicate high and very high sodium content of food and drink items sold or served for immediate consumption....

"The bill makes it an offence to contravene these requirements and imposes first, second and subsequent fines for an offence."

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (ALTERNATE
INSURANCE PLANS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(RÉGIMES D'ASSURANCE
CONCURRENTS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to provide employers with the right to participate in alternate insurance plans / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail pour accorder aux employeurs le droit de participer à des régimes d'assurance concurrents.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Alternate Insurance Plans), 2012: This bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to allow an employer, at any time, to opt to participate in an insurance plan that is offered by a private sector insurer, instead of the insurance plan established under this act, if the alternate plan offers benefits to the employer's workers that are comparable to those offered by the insurance plan as it exists under the

act as of the date that the amendments to the act come into force. To exercise this option, an employer is required to file a notice with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board containing the particulars specified in the regulations made under the act. If an alternate plan is in force, the employer or any workers of the employer who are affected by a decision of the insurer under the alternate plan may appeal the decision to the Financial Services Tribunal.

The bill also repeals the amendments to the act made by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, 2008, which presently do not come into force until January 1, 2013. Those amendments would have made insurance coverage mandatory in the construction industry for independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in partnerships and executive officers of corporations. As a result, insurance coverage for those categories of persons in the construction industry reverts to being optional.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
AND ANIMAL PROTECTION
PRÉPARATION AUX SITUATIONS
D'URGENCE ET PROTECTION
DES ANIMAUX

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to stand in the House today and recognize Emergency Preparedness Week in the province of Ontario.

Disaster can strike at any time and anywhere, Mr. Speaker, often without warning. We have seen recent examples of this after an unusually warm winter caused early flooding and tornadoes, catching some households off guard.

La Semaine de la protection civile nous rappelle le caractère imprévisible des catastrophes et l'importance d'avoir un plan familial de mesures d'urgence, ainsi qu'une trousse de survie contenant suffisamment de nourriture, d'eau et d'autres fournitures de première nécessité pour subsister pendant trois jours.

It is important to have a 72-hour survival kit, as it will help ensure the safety of your family and free up first responders to take care of those in greater need, such as patients in hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

Each emergency plan and survival kit must be as unique as the family it is intended to safeguard. For example: Families with infants must remember formula and diapers; ensure you have access to necessary medicines in case the 24-hour pharmacy is suddenly closed; protect household pets with a separate survival kit. This should include food, medicines, a photo of you and your pet and copies of important veterinary documents.

La préparation aux situations d'urgence n'a rien de compliqué. Il suffit de commencer par quelque chose d'aussi simple que d'avoir une lampe de poche avec une

pile neuve, en cas de panne de courant, et de se rappeler dans quel tiroir elle se trouve. Puis, on continue à partir de là.

To help, Emergency Management Ontario has launched a new website that Ontarians can use to prepare for different emergencies; ontario.ca/beprepared is loaded with interactive features that allow families to subscribe to alerts, test their knowledge of Ontario's natural hazards and build a customized emergency plan using the action plan tool.

Mr. Speaker, this week is also Be Kind to Animals Week. Our government is proud to have introduced the toughest animal welfare legislation in Canada. We joined with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and other partners in animal welfare in encouraging Ontarians to look out for the province's animals.

En fait, la Semaine de la protection civile et la Semaine Respectons les animaux ont quelque chose en commun. Les animaux sont aussi affectés par les situations d'urgence, et il faut donc prendre des précautions pour assurer leur subsistance et leur sécurité.

There is even a section on the new Emergency Management Ontario website with information on protecting and caring for animals.

I encourage all members of this House to attend Emergency Preparedness Week events in your communities and encourage your constituents to create their own emergency plan and survival kit. Your support will help to build safer communities for all Ontarians and our animal friends.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the minister on Emergency Preparedness Week here in the province of Ontario on behalf of my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, who is our critic, who happens to be out at an event with some fire chiefs this afternoon, speaking to them.

If you look at some of the things that have happened here in Ontario in the past—I go back to the time of the Mississauga train derailment; things like the Barrie tornado; the Peterborough flood; there was a tornado in the Caledon area; and I know I've had, in fact, in my community, over the years, the Medonte train derailment, the Severn Falls train derailment and the train derailment down near Laurie's riding in the Gamebridge area—all of them created a lot of issues for people and showed the reason why we have to be prepared for these types of disasters.

I also think of one thing, Mr. Speaker, that's very interesting that happened down on Highway 402, and that was the snowstorm a couple of years back when people were stranded on the highway without the proper assistance. If anything ever was a good example of why we living here in the province of Ontario should be prepared, it was that story alone.

We take for granted; we head out sometimes in our suits, whatever it is, without heavy clothing on a winter's day and we head out to an event, wherever it may be. But what we should have in every vehicle is extra warm

clothing; we should have blankets, in case we have to pull the car over because we're in a storm or something; we should have water; we should have some granola bars, things like that; some candles for heat, because we can't let the car run forever, it will run out of fuel. Those are the kinds of things that we need right in our vehicles as we travel a province like Ontario in the wintertime.

1530

Then you think of things like when the hydro goes out. You often wonder, "Well, what will actually happen?" Really and truly, if you don't have a backup supply—we take hydro for granted quite often. The hydro is out for three or four hours and it's back on. Hydro One has done a great job over the years of making sure they replace the hydro. The reality is, though, sometimes it's even worse than that and it can be out, like the blackout, for a number of days.

I think it's important for a lot of people, particularly in rural Ontario, where you have sump pumps etc., that you should maybe have a backup generator. I don't see anything wrong with that. I know a number of people in my constituency do that because of the possibilities of flooding of basements. Then you've got to worry about also having the power to run your refrigerator or your freezer so you don't lose all your meats etc. These are all very, very important things that the average person should be aware of and should concentrate on as they live their daily lives and prepare for emergencies.

I think overall, our municipalities, working with our emergency services, have done a remarkable job over the years. A number of the members here in all of our caucuses have served on municipal councils. They've worked on emergency plans over the years, and they understand how important it is for the communities to have proper fire protection, police protection and emergency services with paramedics etc. Those are the things that we count on, but they've been put in there for a reason. Every municipality in the province has an emergency service plan, and of course they work with emergency services Ontario as well.

Overall, it's a reminder, as the minister said, by having an Emergency Preparedness Week, that we all work together; that we make sure that when these disasters come up or these tragedies come up, or even things locally come up, we are able to handle them in a very professional way and in a way that we can save lives.

With that, I'd like to say, on behalf of my caucus colleagues, Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, we fully support our emergency service workers and fully support the idea of an Emergency Preparedness Week. In the end, if we listen to these rules, if we abide by these rules and we prepare for these, we will in fact save lives.

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

M. Taras Natyshak: Merci, monsieur le Président, ça me donne plaisir de répondre aux déclarations du ministère de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Bravo.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Merci, madame. Knowing the risk that your community faces is key in an emergency situation. Over the last year, different communities in Ontario dealt with a variety of emergencies. We had the strong tornado in Goderich that ravaged that small town. The towns of Kingsville and Leamington were also hit by a tornado in recent years.

We had prolific forest fires in northern Ontario throughout the summer of 2011, and communities across Ontario came together to host those displaced by those fires. The MNR and firefighters worked very hard to extinguish and isolate those fires. We also had flooding in Fort Albany.

With the nature of our changing climate, natural phenomena are having an increased impact on our communities, and we need to be better prepared for them. Communities need the tools and the awareness required to deal with the changing nature of such natural phenomena. There's also something that we can do at the personal level, like knowing the risks in our community and having an emergency kit.

Taking good care of our seniors and the most vulnerable is also important. Residences housing vulnerable Ontarians include retirement homes, long-term-care homes, hospitals and group homes. There are approximately 700 retirement homes, 400 long-term-care facilities and 3,000 other homes that house vulnerable residents. Since 1980, there have been 44 people who have died from the effects of fires in facilities that are defined as care occupancies in the Ontario fire code. Residents of old-age homes are 5.4 times more likely to die in fires than other Canadians. Many residents have restricted mobility that may be accompanied by cognitive impairments, conditions that can limit their ability to quickly escape if a fire should occur.

Three coroners' inquests into fire deaths in Ontario care occupancies recommended that automatic fire sprinklers be installed. These inquests recommended to successive governments to change the Ontario building code to make the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in residents' rooms mandatory, and retroactive in older facilities.

Since 1997, automatic sprinklers have been required in all newly built care occupancies. There are an estimated 4,300 care and treatment facilities in Ontario that don't have automatic fire sprinklers. That's from the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario.

If the Liberal government is serious about protecting the elderly, it will pass a private members' bill forcing privately owned retirement homes to install the sprinklers that we know save lives.

Ontario's building code requires retirement homes built from 1998 and on to have automatic sprinklers. It does not cover retirement homes built before 1998. Our member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller—his bill is asking for all retirement homes to be equipped with automatic sprinklers, regardless of when they were built.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have the pleasure tomorrow to speak with the Ontario fire chiefs' association, and I certainly will commend them on the role that they play in our emergency preparedness in this province. They're a vital component to ensuring the safety of all the residents in our regions of the province, and they are an important key.

Let's also remember the first responders, police and paramedics who play an important role in our safety. Let's also remind ourselves in this House that they are public servants, that they serve us, to protect us. They put their lives at risk to ensure our safety. In this House, when we discuss the nature of our public service, let's remind ourselves of the important role that they play on our behalf in our communities, and value that role instead of commoditizing their roles and their jobs. They play a role in our communities that really is invaluable, and that is maintaining the safety and the health of our communities and seniors, elderly—vulnerable populations. It's a role that I think we can all appreciate—but all stand here to protect and to ensure that they're given the skills and the tools that they need.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is a pleasure to commend the actions of our first responders and emergency services.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario" in my riding;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing" and use;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the requirements of regulation 319/08," of which I've spoken to the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Environment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned"—my constituents—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking

water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this and give it to Georgia, one of the pages.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition here about bullying in our schools.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

“Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas schools across the province must support any group promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities;

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

“That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it via page Shaumik.

1540

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a report from Ontario’s Auditor General on the province’s air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined;

“Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

“Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

“Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where \$2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

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

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

I support this petition fully and give it to page Carley to take to the table.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully agree with this petition and pass it on to page Jenny.

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontario residents have come to rely on receiving their full Ontario tax credit early in the year; and

“Whereas changes to the tax credit payment schedule were not widely publicized;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reinstate the Ontario tax credit payment schedule utilized during 2011.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and hand it to page Vincent.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from residents of York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

“Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

“Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

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

“Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and hand it over to page Safa.

REGULATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank Boardwalk Dental Care in Brockville for submitting this petition, which has 80 names. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas, as currently legislated by the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, a dentist can be charged with sexual abuse for treating their spouse;

“Whereas the equation cannot be made between placing a filling, scaling a patient's teeth or reading a patient's X-rays and sexual abuse;

“Whereas dentists support zero tolerance as it relates to sexual abuse;

“Whereas, in rural and northern underserved areas of Ontario, dentists prevented from treating their spouses may create a barrier to access;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care immediately exempt dentists from the sexual abuse provisions under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, to allow dentists to provide dental treatment to their spouses; and

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return the authority to review and exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis any complaints involving spousal treatment to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.”

I affix my signature and send it to the table with page William.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I support this petition, sign my name to it and give it to page Constantine.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

As I agree with this petition, I will sign it and send it to the table with page Jenny.

WIND TURBINES

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

“Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

“Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until these serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

“Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

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

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed.”

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

TOURISM

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province’s economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario’s tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

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

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I affix my name to this petition and ask page Sarah to deliver it to the table.

1550

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their

patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I will attach my name to this and pass it to Dia.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have yet another petition signed by thousands of people addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;...

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I sign my name to this petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government of Ontario to create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs; and that the government consider funding this tax credit from the recently created \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that it's pretty clear to everyone in this place and, in fact, every person in this province, that we have a jobs crisis here in Ontario. Far too many people are having serious, serious problems finding work in their communities, and when I say in their communities, I mean in communities, really, in all parts of this province. Statistics Canada reports that Windsor's unemployment rate is stuck in the double digits at 10.7%—18,000 people in that community out of work; London, 22,700 people out of a job, also flirting with double digits, in terms of the unemployment rate; St. Catharines/Niagara, 16,000 people unemployed; 25,000 people looking for work in the city of Hamilton; 27,000 people are out of a job in northern Ontario; unemployment is stuck at 17,000 in Oshawa; and 275,000 people are without a job in Toronto, where the unemployment rate sits at 8.6%.

This is unacceptable, Speaker. The government's jobs plan, if they had one, certainly has not been showing any results whatsoever. A recent poll, in fact, showed that Ontarians are among the least optimistic about Canada's economy, with only about one third of people in that poll believing that the economy is going to improve within the next year. The same survey shows that the people in this province are most concerned about job loss, with more than one quarter worried about somebody in their household losing a job. We have the most pessimistic outlook, in terms of jobs, of any province in this entire country.

Not only is our unemployment rate above the national average, but the average wages in this province for people who are working are actually falling; they're declining. We're one of the only provinces in the entire nation where this is actually happening.

Although Ontario is no longer in a technical recession, the impact of the jobs lost years ago and the slowdown in the US have had a significant and lasting impact. The fact is that the federal and provincial governments' so-called plan on jobs hasn't worked for people in this province.

Let's remember that plan: billions and billions and billions of dollars in across-the-board, no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts, along with an unfair HST. That was supposed to deliver 600,000 new jobs in the province. People rolled their eyes—New Democrats rolled their eyes—when these government announcements were being made. Not only was the province going to be making it more expensive to get to work and keep the lights on; the government was wildly claiming that it would actually create jobs with these kinds of policies. Well, the proof is in the pudding. It absolutely has not worked.

The fact is, if the billions and billions of dollars of federal and provincial government money that they have given up on corporate tax giveaways were going to create work, there wouldn't be 550,000 people in this province who are still looking for jobs. Those are failed policies that this government and the federal government need to admit have not worked.

There would be more jobs than anybody knew what to do with if those policies had actually worked. We wouldn't be talking at all about jobs in this Legislature. Yet we have to talk about jobs every single day, because this government needs to acknowledge that its policies have failed and that we need to get serious about doing things differently when it comes to job creation in this province.

Despite the corporate tax cuts, investment as a share of GDP has declined steadily over the past decade. We are not getting investment in this province. In fact, a couple of times the Premier has publicly rued the fact and wondered why we're not getting investment in this province. Investments have actually reduced from 8% to 6% in terms of GDP.

What's happening to those dollars we're giving corporations in HST and in corporate tax cuts across the board? They're taking that money and they're stashing it away in cash reserves. The corporate sector is doing quite fine, thank you very much; they're doing quite fine. But the rest of us are not benefiting at all from those kinds of policies. Our economy is not benefiting, workers are not benefiting and families in this province are not benefiting from those policies.

It's interesting. Cabinet ministers write big cheques, cut ribbons, get their photos in the paper, in local news. A little while later, the company closes up shop; it lays off the workers; it goes south. Ask the member from London-Fanshawe. She'll tell you what happened when Caterpillar did that exact same thing. We have example after example. Look at Navistar: They did the exact same thing. They get the corporate tax cuts, they get the giveaways, but there are no strings attached. So what happens? We're giving up revenue; we're giving away the dollars. We're giving away the very dollars that those hard-pressed workers who are now laid off were putting into our coffers, and we're giving them to those companies who are simply walking out of the province, pulling up their stakes and walking away.

Navistar laid off 1,000 hard-working Ontarians, and what happened? They moved to Ohio. Guess what was happening in Ohio? Oh, they had job creation tax credits in Ohio; that's what happened. They moved to a state in the United States where they had job creation tax credits—something that we need to do here in this province, I think.

This government wrote a \$7-million cheque to Global Sticks in Thunder Bay, and what happened there? They closed their doors. Recently they reopened their doors, but they still have yet to meet the jobs that this government claimed would be created by investing in this company.

This government wrote a \$2.5-million cheque to Silicon Knights of St. Catharines, and then they laid off their workforce, half of it.

Your no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways, the way that this government has been doing things, have simply not created jobs. Ask the people at John Deere in Welland; Xstrata in Sudbury; the GM truck plant in

Oshawa; AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario; BFGoodrich in Kitchener–Waterloo; the list goes on and on and on. Ask them if they think that no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts made their lives better.

1600

The fact is, the government's strategy has not worked. It has not created jobs, and instead of investing, the corporations are sitting on record levels of cash. Non-financial corporations had \$477 billion—\$477 billion, Speaker—in cash reserves in the second quarter of 2011. That's up 200% from a decade earlier and an astonishing 750% from two decades earlier.

The heart of the problem is that there's absolutely no incentive for companies to use the money that they take to make investments. They can do anything they want with that money. They could create jobs, but they certainly don't have to. They could invest; obviously, they don't have to, because they haven't been. They've done neither in the last 10 years. They're not creating jobs, they're not investing and they haven't done so since the government started yet another round of corporate tax cuts back in 2009.

It's a failed, failed policy—it's a miserably failed policy—and what we're doing in this motion very clearly is acknowledging the fact that these initiatives have been an utter failure and that we need to change the direction, we need to do something differently. What we need to do is actually take a more targeted approach that says that those companies that are investing should get tax credits, those companies that are creating jobs should get tax credits. That way, the revenue that we're giving up, at least we know we're getting something for it: We're getting people back to work, which should be the number one priority of this government. That's what the number one priority of this government should be.

We have brought this up year after year after year, and the Liberals, in their arrogance, have ignored it year after year after year. What New Democrats are saying is that you've set up a jobs and prosperity council or fund, you've got the opportunity, and we ask you to do it yet again. We want you to use some of those dollars and earmark them for job creation tax credits, because if there's one thing hard-working Ontarians want to do, it's get back to work, and they want the government's commitment to help them get there. It's a simple motion, Speaker, and I expect everyone to support it today.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to get up and participate in this debate on a motion that the NDP has put forward to create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs. It sounds like a good idea, and I think our Premier has indicated that it's something we'd be willing to consider.

I want to begin by thanking the leader of the third party for the approach she took during the last budget discussions and negotiations. I think she took a responsible approach in working with us to craft some ideas and some changes to the budget that made it easier for her

party to support. I think it stands in contrast to the approach taken by the Leader of the Opposition, who took a different approach, who decided not to engage, who decided not to be involved at all. In fact, someone said that that's going AWOL, absent without leadership. So I want to commend the leader of the third party for taking a different approach.

I guess one of the things I look at, though, is that I seem to remember—in fact, I think it's more than just remember. I think part of the agreement that the leader of the third party made with the Premier was that we would take this constructive idea of a jobs tax credit, refer it to the soon-to-be-created jobs and prosperity task force, so that they could use their expertise to determine whether this is an idea that stands up under scrutiny. Is this an idea that is worth pursuing? Is it better than some of the things that we're doing now? It may well be, and we're very open to that.

So I think the Premier has been very collegial in his acceptance of this as a constructive idea. That's how I would have thought it would have been brought forward today: as a constructive idea. Instead, from the leader of the third party we got a diatribe running down Ontario's economy, running down the work that's being done by our business sector to grow a strong economy. That was disappointing, very disappointing.

I think, frankly, it's a bit of an end run. I thought we had an agreement to bring this forward and put it towards the jobs and prosperity council. I thought that was the agreement, but instead, Madam Chair, today they're trying to do an end run so that the task force doesn't even have the opportunity to look at this and compare it. I don't know why they would want to do that. I don't know why they'd be afraid to let the experts have a look at this and give us some advice and then together we can make a decision as to how we move forward, but that's what they've decided to do.

I think our approach is sensible. I think our approach is very reasonable. Let's take a good look at this. Let's accept it as a constructive idea. Let's put it into the mix of decisions that are going to have to be made as we consolidate a number of business support programs and tax expenditure programs. There are too many business support programs. There are too many tax expenditure programs. We need to bring it under one window. That's what we've acknowledged. That's what we want to do in the budget. We set out the jobs and prosperity task force to take a look at some of these programs to provide the little bit better focus to ensure that we're getting absolute full value for the investments we make, and at the same time to identify about a quarter of a billion dollars in savings that come off of our budget.

What the leader of the third party is proposing today is a tax credit that might create some jobs, something that we would welcome, that we'd like to take a look at. What they haven't said clearly is how they're going to pay for it. They say, "Let's take it out of the business support programs"—easy to say, a little harder to do. It's a little

harder to do when you look at what some of the programs are.

Let's just look at, for instance, business support tax credits. Is the leader of the third party suggesting we cut back on the film and television project tax credits that are very, very important to our entertainment industry that is contributing \$1.2 billion to the economy? Or what about—this is something else that I guess she considers corporate welfare—the apprenticeship training tax credit? I think supporting apprenticeships is a good thing. I think it's important. I think it's good for the economy. Are you suggesting that we should be getting rid of that in favour of your tax credit?

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's fair game. You can suggest that, but I think it's reasonable for us to say, "Let's let some experts take a look at it. Let's take a close look to see if it's more important than the apprentice training tax credit."

What about the co-op education tax credit? In this day and age, we want our students getting a good education. That co-op tax credit is really important.

What about the Ontario business research institute tax credit or the Ontario innovation tax credit? They may be tax credits we want to take a look at. They may not be getting the full value that we want or the job creation we want. That's why we're looking at it. But I would hope that the leader of the third party is still in favour of research and innovation. They're the tax credits that she's saying we should be doing away with.

What about the resource tax credit? I think our resource industry is pretty important to this economy, pretty important to the north. There's a member who sits a few seats away from the leader of the third party who might be just a little bit upset if we touched those resource tax credits. You're going to have to square that with that particular member.

What about the Ontario small business deduction? That's important. Helping to grow small business I thought was something the NDP used to support. But I guess these days they're saying, "No, we don't even need to look at that anymore. What we're proposing is a lot more important."

What about the Ontario tax credit for manufacturing and processing?

I think you get my point, Madam Chair. There are a lot of tax credits out there. We need to take a look at it. There's an opportunity here to look at some form of consolidation to ensure they're focused and we're getting best value, but I think it's something we need to do reasonably.

Let's take a look at some of the business support programs, because these are some of the programs that the NDP are going to be suggesting we're going to have to cut if we are to find the 200-million-odd dollars that the NDP proposal is going to cost. There are aboriginal programs, very important aboriginal programs that we have in our business support programs. There are rural and agricultural programs that are very, very important to

rural Ontario and our farming sector. There are the auto programs that are very important to our auto industry. There's the southwest Ontario development fund, the eastern Ontario development fund, and there's also, of course, the northern heritage fund. Those are programs that are all really important and actually programs I know the NDP supports, but those are the programs that we've got to take a look at. They're part of those business support programs that the leader of the third party says we shouldn't be engaged in.

What about the programs that support the manufacturing sector? Or what about our growth programs that are attracting businesses here, like the strategic jobs and investment fund? It's a hugely successful fund, attracting businesses here, growing jobs in this province that are very, very important.

1610

Is the leader of the third party suggesting we cut support for the wine industry? She might be suggesting that, because she's not telling us where she's going to get this money from.

What about craft brewers? Should we abandon the craft brewers? I know that Mr. Crack wouldn't want to see us do that. I can't remember the name of his—

Mr. Grant Crack: Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's a craft brewer there. He'd be very upset if that wasn't there. What about life sciences and that important growing sector in our economy? Is she talking about getting rid of our clean energy benefit for businesses? Businesses benefit from it.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Not big businesses; small businesses benefit from it. Is that where she wants to cut?

Or how about the forestry industry? That same member that sits a few seats over from you might be just a little tad upset if that was one of the areas you want to see us reduce our supports for.

Madam Chair, again, I think what my point is here is that these are very important programs that are creating jobs and are contributing to building a very important sector.

I want to end with this, because I know I've got a lot of other colleagues who want to participate in this debate. Where I really have a problem with the comments of the leader of the third party is when she is talking down our economy. This is an economy that grew 46,100 net jobs. One in four jobs created in North America last month were here in the province of Ontario. That's something that everyone in this Legislature should be proud of. We shouldn't be trying to talk that down. Some 345,000 jobs were created in this province since the recession. That's a pretty good record. That's more jobs than the rest of Canada combined. That's something we, in this part of the House, are proud of, but we're also proud of our business community, which has worked very hard to respond and create those jobs. Today, and in the past, you spent more time trying to trash-talk that business community than working with us to grow our business community.

Madam Chair, my time is running out here—

Interjection: In more ways than one.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —and I know I've got a lot of colleagues that want to—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the third party for their rousing response, and I'm delighted to take part in this debate. I look forward to seeing what the results are of the vote today. I won't be supporting this motion, Madam Chair, not that I don't think that the tax credit could be a good idea; it's something, though, we've got to take a closer look at. We need to compare it with some of the other alternatives and come forward with the best possible policies for the people of this province, the workers of this province, to grow our exports, to grow our job opportunities. That's what we intend to do, Madam Chair, and we welcome the third party's support for those continued efforts. Thank you.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am pleased to rise and offer feedback and comments with respect to the NDP opposition day motion today. I have to sort of chuckle to myself at the comments of the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, coming from his own lips, when he talks about time running out. I think time is running out when it comes to the Dalton McGuinty government. I know I've been clear that economic recovery will come to the province of Ontario the day Dalton McGuinty loses his job, and I think everyone is anticipating that at some point.

I am going to be sharing my time with my honourable colleague from Thornhill a little later.

Speaker, the NDP are proposing that the Liberal government create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs and that the government consider funding this tax credit from the recently created \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund. I have been on the record many times saying that this government is doing nothing to create jobs. We saw in the recent budget that they want to create a committee to discuss creating jobs, that they want to host a conference and a party to discuss creating jobs. This government doesn't have a jobs plan. They don't have any plan. They have no plan to create jobs at all in the province of Ontario.

At first glance, this motion sounds like a good idea: Reward companies financially for creating jobs. In theory, it sounds like it would be a good thing for Ontario. But I would like to offer a different opinion to this House today. I believe that Ontario has to be a place of equality. Here in Ontario, we pride ourselves on principles such as fair and equal treatment for all. This province did not become the economic engine that it once was through favouritism.

Our party, our leader Tim Hudak and our caucus firmly believe that it is the duty of the provincial government to ensure that there is equality among all businesses.

I know I've heard from entrepreneurs, small business owners and corporations of every size, and they are telling me the same thing. The current government's favouritism, tax breaks and subsidies are not fair and they're not working. In fact, what I've been told is that this government's tinkering and lack of direction is actually hurting Ontario's competitiveness, taking hard-earned taxpayers' money and giving it away, driving up the deficit, and not getting any tangible results in return.

What the Ontario government does need to do is, it needs to foster an environment in Ontario that makes this province the absolute number one destination to own and operate a business. What the government needs to do is make Ontario a world-class place for all to do business—not just for some companies, not just for some industries, but for every single business. Open the markets, increase the competition, create jobs and grow our economy.

Ontario should not be a place that is good for some businesses but bad for others. We need to lessen the tax burden for all the businesses in this province. Since the election back in October, we have heard from a number of people, including Roger Martin, Don Drummond and the Ontario Auditor General, to name a few. They have told us quite clearly that the Ontario government's manoeuvring of finances is not producing the results desired, and it's not working.

The cornerstone of the current government's economic development policy involves granting billions of dollars in corporate subsidies. Often these subsidies have absolutely no benefit to the taxpayer and, in some cases, some of these subsidies offer as much as \$300,000 per job. One company received \$1.5 million to create only five jobs. This is clearly the wrong path to create jobs, and, instead of helping our economy, simply runs up Dalton McGuinty's deficit and runs up Ontario's bills.

Our party believes in fairness and equality for Ontario businesses, and we can't support a new program that favours one business over another. Taxes on businesses must be fair. Ontario is not creating a business-friendly environment by offering tax subsidies to some and not to others. Business owners will look to other regions to own and operate their business if this province continues to show favouritism to some and not to others.

It is only through fair policy that we will grow Ontario's economy and tackle the current jobs crisis that's occurring under this Premier and under this government. That's right, Speaker. Our current jobs crisis, which is a result of Dalton McGuinty's failed leadership, has caused our unemployment rate to be above the national average for over five straight years now. Shameful.

In a recent report done by the Fraser Institute, they found that there is virtually no evidence that corporate welfare is effective. The Fraser Institute says, "Peer-reviewed research on business subsidies does not support political ... claims that corporate welfare is responsible for widespread economic growth." The report went on to say that corporate welfare does not provide a "demonstrable positive impact upon the economy,

employment and tax revenues because of the substitution effect; that is, where hiring at one company, or tax revenues in one locale, merely displace jobs and tax revenues elsewhere, but with no new employment or revenues created overall.”

We have heard time and time again that the shifting of money from one place to another doesn't work. Experts from a variety of different industries have told us the same thing. The government has to stop spending. The Liberals under Dalton McGuinty need to reduce the overall size and cost of government, and they must create a tax structure that is fair for all. If the government were to listen, they would grow our economy, and that would result in more jobs for the people of Ontario.

We keep hearing of ways that the government and the opposition want to move money around in the name of trying to create more jobs. This is just a temporary fix. It's not addressing the real issue. The real issue is that there is a jobs crisis in Ontario, and I believe that the real reason we have a jobs crisis in this province is because taxes are too high, hydro is too expensive and red tape is too thick.

Ontario, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's failed energy experiments, now has the second-highest electricity costs in all of North America. Talk about a race to the bottom.

1620

In my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, high electricity bills are the number one reason why people are losing their jobs and why companies are relocating. There are better places to own and operate a business, so owners and entrepreneurs alike are going to the States and to other jurisdictions where hydro is much more competitive. The sad reality is that it is better to operate a business outside of Ontario than inside of Ontario, thanks to Dalton McGuinty.

I would venture further to say that offering a tax credit for job creation does not outweigh all the other government burdens that exist for business owners in Ontario. The Fraser Institute report concluded in their research that “the best means by which to encourage economic growth is not through assistance from the government, but through neutrality in the competitive marketplace.” The report also noted that governments often point to job creation to justify subsidies. However, it was found that the statistics and the facts on these job creation claims do not support the employment claims by the government.

As reported in the Ottawa Citizen last year on November 15, the recent Roger Martin report asked that the government abandon its policy of picking winners and losers through subsidies to business. The government's job is to ensure that there is equality for all. It's not the job of the government to play favourites or to reward one company and not the other. It is the government's job to ensure that there is a fair tax structure in place, stable government policy and realistic regulations. That is the job of government.

The third party is claiming that taking funds out of the jobs and prosperity fund and giving it to business for creating jobs will help Ontario's economy grow and help

address the jobs crisis in this province. The research we have seen indicates otherwise. Our party believes that it's not the government's job, as I said, to pick winners and losers amongst privately owned companies. Government's role is to create the best conditions for economic growth in a stable, surprise-free environment.

Ontario families also can't afford these massive subsidies and corporate handouts.

With the recent news of Ontario's credit rating being downgraded, the opposition, myself and, really, the rest of Ontario are extremely worried. For several weeks, all that we have heard from the party opposite is that the proposed budget is good for Ontario and that this budget will bring Ontario back to prosperity. The budget is just another sad example of the Liberal government refusing to listen.

With the recent credit downgrades, the Liberal government's budget has failed. No matter how many times the finance minister looks through newspaper clippings with a microscope to find someone who says the opposite, he will not change the facts. No matter how many times the finance minister says the budget is just what Ontario needs, it will not change the fact that Ontario is headed toward economic failure.

Our province was once the economic engine of Canada, and now it's in debt so much that our credit scores have been downgraded, thanks to this government.

We have said it over and over again: The Liberal government must stop spending. This is a reality that the Liberal Party and the NDP have to accept. The provincial treasury is empty and our credit score has now, sadly, been downgraded. This is unacceptable. Dalton McGuinty has been entrusted with the finances of the people of Ontario and all that he has done for the last nine years is spend. Now the NDP are encouraging more spending.

As I said, government needs to create the climate for growth and then get out of the way. Entrepreneurs need to be left alone, and jobs will be created, period. Our caucus, our party, believes this is how to create a climate in Ontario that will bring business back to this province. Our goal is to bring long-term growth to Ontario's labour market and to make Ontario the best place to create and grow a business.

I'll be voting against this motion. I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed an honour to stand up here today. You know, for my entire political life, which is now very long, I have had nothing but the highest of respect for business and business people. They are, in fact, as a Conservative will probably tell you, the engine that runs this country, this province, this city.

In fact, one thing I've learned about business people, though, is that they will always do whatever they can to maximize their profit. That's why they're business people in the first place. If you can understand that little fundamental rule of capitalism and about business, you

will understand it all. They will do whatever they need to do to maximize their profit.

So here we go. What we're talking about today is a tax credit. You can give a tax credit as a carrot and a stick. If they want to grow their business and hire an additional person, then there is a tax credit to do this. They will understand that. They will understand that by bringing in additional people in order to grow the business, they can actually get a rebate and it will help to maximize their profit. I think there will be hundreds, maybe thousands of businesses across this province that will do exactly that.

What is the Conservative thought? The Conservative thought is to look at Milton Friedman as if he's some kind of god, to say that this Milton Friedman trickle-down theory is all you have to do. You just make sure that the guys who have all the money get more, and then it will trickle down to the poor over time. I remember when Milton Friedman was first on television expounding his theories. I remember with horror watching a United States President stand there and say, "This is our new idea. This is what we're going to do here." I remember watching in horror, watching the Iron Lady of Great Britain do exactly the same thing. Did that help those economies? Did that help anything there? What you have in both of those economies, much like here, is that the rich have gotten very rich and the poor have gotten very poor. The whole middle class is shrinking, and that's as a direct result of what is being espoused by my friend who spoke immediately before me, because that's what they believe.

Real wages in Ontario have declined in the last 20 years. People, even in the middle class, are not as well-off as they were 20 years ago. But what has happened is that corporate holdings have gone up 750%. That's money sitting in the bank that is not doing any good to our economy, not doing any good to the people of this province or the 550,000 people who are looking for work. Surely this Legislature has an obligation to look for the 550,000 people looking for work before we have to look to industry and corporations who are sitting on billions of dollars—billions of dollars—which are to no effect, except to make them rich.

We have, I think, a pretty modest tax proposal. What we are saying is that the government should invest up to \$250 million out of a pot of \$2 billion that they now spend to rearrange the tax structure. We are not saying, as the minister said when he gave that long diatribe, "What do you want to get rid of, money for investments here, money for the wine industry or money for the craft brewers?" or any of those things. What we're saying is that you have \$2 billion; you take \$250 million of that, or about 12%, and you redirect it.

We leave it to government and to finance, or even to this jobs and prosperity council that hasn't been set up, to determine exactly how that's going to be. But in the end, you're going to get credits. You've got to get 550,000 people or a great many of them finding a job, because I will tell you, Madam Speaker, if that money is properly invested and if business will do what is best for them,

they will see that the way to get additional credits or tax credits, the way to pay a percentage of the new employees wages and to grow their business, is to do precisely that. I think that will do far better effect than willy-nilly handing out money that has no strings attached.

The leader of the NDP quite rightly pointed out some of the failures of this government. I think government members don't want to listen to those failures. They don't want to know that millions of dollars were given away to absolutely no effect. We are saying, quite simply, if you hire somebody, you'll get a tax credit. It's pretty easy. I think the public will understand that, and I do believe the public will support that.

1630

This is a two-year, refundable, job-creator tax credit through the corporate income tax system. It is not very hard to administer. You just have to file your income tax, you just have to show that you have hired some additional people, you get a refund off of that, and it's done. It will benefit everyone, but I think particularly it will benefit small business in the province of Ontario. They are the incubators. They are the ones who directly create new jobs, far more than large business, and the history of Ontario will show that.

It's those incubator companies, those new ones starting up—don't take this badly, but when RIM was first starting out, what an incubator company that was. But as they get very large, just like all large companies, they lose a little bit of their momentum. I think that if we need to create the jobs, we need to create them at the bottom.

Take a province like Manitoba. Manitoba has no taxes for small business; no corporate taxes up to \$500,000. They have no taxes. That's the kind of thing that will help a small business person. That's what we need to do and look at here in Ontario. But I'm not going down that road right now.

The road we need to do, and the most pressing social priority we have, is to put 550,000 people back to work. If the government's policies haven't worked, please try something else. Don't wait for a prosperity council a year from now; seize the opportunity now. It's right here, it's doable and it can be put into the corporate tax system right away. We can be putting people back to work. And do you know something? Maybe the jobs and prosperity council will have a look at it and say, "What a great idea. We endorse it," rather than having the same debate we're having here today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to close by inviting everybody to vote for this. This is not some radical idea coming out of strictly us; this is an idea that is taking place already in other places in Canada. It's an idea whose time has come in the United States, because the President of the United States, Mr. Obama, has included this in his platform. It's an idea that the people of France bought into on Sunday. They are sick of the austerity budget where all the people at the bottom are the losers, and they want a government that is proactive and will bring jobs and prosperity back to them.

I'm telling you that if the government agrees to do that here in Ontario, I will be one of those who would stand up and applaud it.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: The opposition day motion says the following:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government of Ontario to create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs; and that the government consider funding this tax credit from the recently created \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund."

I just want to be clear, for the people who are following this debate on television who might be interested in this issue, that if you read this you might be left with the impression that there is \$2 billion of untethered money perhaps, if we could characterize it that way; that this is a new fund that has taken new money that is looking for a place to go and live and reside.

Of course, that's not the case. What the jobs and prosperity fund will do is take the money that has already been spent and earmarked historically on about 40 different programs across about seven ministries, as I understand it, and consolidate it into this particular fund. This council that is to be appointed in short order will then review all of these programs and decide which of that \$2 billion is being spent well and which of it is not being spent well. So I want to start there and make sure that people who are following this understand that there isn't \$2 billion just floating out there ready for people to come and apply and we're going to see what we can use the money for. In fact, what's being brought forward today represents an additional expenditure at a time when we're bringing in a budget obviously that is trying to get us back into a balanced position by 2017-18. It's important that we put that frame around what this is trying to do.

The other thing I would like to say before I get into my general remarks is that in the book we're talking about the jobs and prosperity council to be appointed soon that will oversee this jobs and prosperity fund that has \$2 billion historically attached to it. But we're surprised that this is here today because, as we understood it, there was a deal in place that this particular idea, which has been spoken to in the Legislature on a number of occasions, would be referred to the soon-to-be-formed council and that they would take it under consideration and that they would report back to the Legislative Assembly sometime early in 2013. We as Liberals on this side of the House thought there was a deal between the third party and the government about how this particular item was going to be dealt with.

I'll leave that out there just for that, because the information that has been provided to me was that there was an agreement in place on how this item was going to be dealt with. Apparently, that's not the case.

As I've mentioned, the jobs and prosperity council administering the fund—we were willing to look at the

idea to make a determination around whether or not this idea had merit. We are not dismissing it out of hand. It is still our understanding and our belief that this will go forward to that group and that they will come back with an informed opinion on whether or not this particular type of tax credit has merit or not.

Speaker, I want to give you, however, a few examples of some things that we have done that I believe very clearly have created jobs in a very tangible way—all of which have been voted against by the third party that has brought forward this opposition day motion today. For example, our infrastructure funding over the course of the last eight years going on nine years: We have spent \$60 billion on infrastructure in the province of Ontario over the course of the last eight years. This budget maintains a commitment that we made in the election of 2011 to a further \$30 billion to \$35 billion on infrastructure over the course of the next three years. I don't believe there is an individual who represents a riding in this Legislature today who can't reference projects in their particular riding over the last eight years that didn't bring some significant benefit to their communities. That's \$30 billion more yet to come. We know that money creates jobs. The previous \$60 billion was voted against at every turn by the third party.

The northern Ontario heritage fund: I mention this one often in the Legislature. When we came in, it was \$60 million. We transformed it to fund private-sector job creation. Beginning in 2007, we were increasing it by \$10 million each year. The northern Ontario heritage fund has gone from \$60 million up to \$100 million a year, every one of those increases voted against by the members of the third party, who are bringing forward a tax credit proposal that they say will create jobs. Yet they voted against those increases in the northern Ontario heritage fund. In fact, when they were in government in the early 1990s, they took all \$60 million out of the fund and put it in consolidated revenue; they took it right out of the north.

Here's what the northern Ontario heritage fund has done. Since October 2003, more than 17,800 direct jobs have been created or sustained in the north as a result of approximately 4,400 projects, to which the NOHFC committed more than \$723 million. These investments have leveraged another \$2.4 billion from contractors—an example of a program that works, an example of a program that creates jobs, voted against by the members of the third party. In the same vein, the eastern Ontario development fund and the southwestern Ontario development fund—all voted against by members of the third party.

The northern highways program—voted against by the third party all the time. Record levels of investment since 2003, peaking at about \$770 million in 2010. The previous high on northern highways was about \$250 million in any one year. We peaked in 2009 or 2010 at about \$770 million, bringing forward major northern highway transformation, creating jobs, creating safer

roadways—all voted against by the members of the third party.

The Second Career program: We know what happened in 2008, although some will not acknowledge it. The world went through the greatest recession since the Great Depression; 30 million to 40 million people lost their jobs. We created Second Career. That program has seen, I think, 40,000 or 50,000 people go through it, and a lot of those people, through the support provided by Second Career, have found themselves back in the workforce. This is a program that is a wonderful example of job creation, a very, very good piece.

I think that when we talk on matters of job creation, it is important that the third party, the NDP, come clean on exactly what their policy piece is when it comes to development of the Far North. One of the pieces that gets a lot of discussion certainly in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I would suggest all across northern Ontario, is issues related to mining, specifically the Ring of Fire. What do we know was the policy position of the NDP going into the election in October 2011? On their environmental website was a commitment to no development north of 51.

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I say this, looking for them and giving them an opportunity to let us know exactly what their policy is, because if there is one tremendous opportunity for the people of northern Ontario when it comes to job creation, it is in the mining field today. It is more specifically related to issues in the geography that has come to be known as the Ring of Fire. This is a party that brings forward an idea today that they say they want to create jobs, and yet they said, “No development north of 51.” If you’re serious about development north of 51, if you’re really serious about job creation, you will let us know exactly what your position is.

My colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North, Michael Gravelle, put out a press release on this during the election, and, for the first time in three years or so, that policy piece a day or two later disappeared from their website. People in northern Ontario are truly interested in this issue, and they want to know what the position is of the NDP on this particular piece.

I’m going to close by just referencing some of the comments that were made by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex in terms of fairness and not picking winners and losers, and that’s a fair comment. But I would ask him if he considered the support that came from our government to the auto sector as picking a winner or picking a loser. Four hundred thousand direct and indirect jobs were saved. Many people felt that without our support, those jobs would have disappeared from Ontario forever.

I remind the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that, as well, the federal Conservatives came kicking and screaming to the table because that was their language: “We don’t want to pick winners and losers.” That was always their language. Finally, they came kicking and

screaming—400,000 direct and indirect jobs in that sector are still here in Ontario today.

Speaker, I’ve kind of gone over my time a little bit. I apologize to the members of our side for doing that, and I have to wrap it up.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I find this an interesting debate. I listened with interest to the leader of the third party, for whom I have great respect, and I listened to her initial points, primarily that there is indeed a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario—we agree with that, in the Progressive Conservative Party; that the McGuinty government has no discernible plan to address this jobs crisis, and we agree with that in the Progressive Conservative Party; and that corporate welfare clearly doesn’t work. We agree with that in the Progressive Conservative Party. So it’s interesting how much common ground there is.

We have this motion before us. The motion is, aside from everything else, a centrepiece of the New Democratic Party that has survived from the election campaign of last summer and fall. What it talks about is a refundable tax credit of 10% of annual salary, to a maximum of \$5,000—in other words, the top salary would be \$50,000—and the job has to exist for the ensuing two years. That’s a rather interesting number. I don’t know that it does very much at the end of the day, but we’ll talk about that further as I continue.

By the way, I listened with interest, as well, as the Minister of Economic Development spent about 10 or 12 minutes going through literally a litany, a long list, of all of the various tax credits and grants and programs and funds that are available. If he was so correct about those funds having the force and effect that he talks about, then we wouldn’t be looking at this motion today, we wouldn’t be weighing this, and there wouldn’t be a motion from the NDP or—a concern of us—there wouldn’t be a jobs crisis if all of that had worked. So you know what, Speaker? A pox on both their houses, because neither of them has got it right.

The NDP motion comes from the election campaign, as I said. In the election campaign, that party took great pains to position itself as centre left. That’s what it wants to be seen as. That’s a branding exercise; they’re centre left. The fact of the matter is, they’re not centre left; they are a socialist party. That’s what they are. They believe in the redistribution of wealth. This is an aspect of how to do that. What we live in in the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It’s a democratic socialist party, I’ll give you that, but it’s a socialist party. It doesn’t want to admit that what we live in in the province of Ontario, indeed in the Dominion of Canada, is a mixed capitalist system where we all have the opportunity to take our chance, roll our dice and take our best shot. We also know that people who do go out and exercise that entrepreneurial right wind up oftentimes getting burned; this is what happens. They try again. Many people in this House

have done it. Some of you have lost; some of you have won. Same thing for me.

I remember very well in the early 1990s when that party was in power under a fellow named Bob Rae—who I think was in the NDP then and now maybe he's a Liberal; we're not sure quite sure, but we know he's on the left. In any event, they had a program that was not so different from this one. It was called the Jobs Ontario Community Action Plan. The acronym for that was JOCAP—and it was. It was a joke, in many respects. I remember it well, because I used it.

I'm going to tell you how I used it—I used it quite legally and legitimately. I had a small business. It was in its very early stages of infancy. In other debate yesterday, I talked about that period of time. I wasn't drawing any salary, so I would be happy for any kind of government help. But the bottom line on this is, we were in a growth stage and we were creating additional jobs. How were we doing it? We were expanding the capacity of our company: We were buying new equipment, we were building new premises, and we were creating the conditions to accommodate additional staff.

Along comes my partner one day and says, "You know, there's this new fund that's been created by the Ontario government"—I can't remember the number, but \$10,000 seems to ring true—"and they will give us up to \$10,000 per job that we create." I said, "Well, we're hiring three new people." She said, "I know. I'm going to apply for it." We got \$30,000. So I was thrilled to get that.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to thank my friend from the NDP for the applause, because what he's not getting is that I took the money because it was there and it was legal to take, but the bottom line is, the money did not drive the development of the jobs. The jobs happened because of the hard work within our company and the fact that we used our own resources to expand.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And the economic development minister says that I should pay it back. Too little, too late, my friend.

The bottom line is, that's what we did. And that's my point: If the government of the day, or the government of this day, said to a small business person like I was, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to allow you to access small business loans on an easier-to-get basis," or "We're going to reduce your energy costs"—that's a very big deal in the province of Ontario: reduced energy costs. The company that I ran was very electronic, so we had energy costs that were significant but they were probably two cents a kilowatt hour then compared to what would have to be paid now. So energy costs are a big deal. Suppose we had had an accelerated equipment writeoff; that would have been a very interesting one. Suppose that we had been able to get tax credits against leasehold improvements or acquisition of furniture that accommodated people. All of those kinds of things would have helped because we had to do that anyway. And it

was only by doing those things that we created the conditions where we could hire the additional people and, in a very backwards way, wound up claiming the tax credits—actually, they were a payment in cash at the time, if you can believe it. No wonder they were in so much trouble with the deficit. But we'll leave that for another day.

The point is, there is a way to stimulate companies so that they create the jobs that you need. It is not by handing them up to \$5,000 in essentially bribe money and saying, "Look, here's five thousand bucks. Go hire somebody for an additional \$45,000." That's not how you do it. It's never going to work.

With respect to my friends in the NDP, what I can say for that party is that they have principles and they stand by them. I would hope to say that our party has principles and I stand by them, but at that point, we begin to differ.

So I don't know what it is that makes politicians want to meddle and dictate to citizens and businesses how they should spend their money and what they should do. But politicians—and, I'll have to admit it, of all stripes, but today we're talking about that stripe, over on my left. They're trying to say to businesses, "Here's what we want you to do. Here's how we're going to meddle: We're going to give you some money and you're going to create jobs." It doesn't work, Speaker. It doesn't work.

It must be the same mentality that makes it impossible for some people to avoid editing other people's work. You know the way you read something and you say, "You know, if I had written this, it would have been different." Well, that's what they seem to be wanting to do.

I have an inherent dislike—and I think anybody who has heard me debate almost any bill in this Legislature knows it: the less government, the better. The less interference, the better. Create the conditions by doing whatever it is you have to in the tax system or any other code of laws to allow business people to thrive. Take away the red tape. Take away the forms. Let people do what it is I did and so many of you watching on television or here in this House have done: go by your wits and create your business and take advantage of programs that are positive, that can influence the overall well-being of all of us in sectoral stimulation, rather than saying, "I'm going to give you a few bucks and you're going to hire some people." That's not going to happen.

1650

If we have learned anything over the past eight years of the McGuinty government's rule, of the McGuinty government's time in power, it is—a couple of things; picking winners and losers doesn't work. I mentioned the speech earlier by the Minister of Economic Development, who waved a number of funds in front of us. You know, funds are great, but if they get us to a point where we have almost 600,000 people in the province of Ontario who are without jobs, what good are those funds? What are they doing? Telling businesses how to operate, telling them what they have to do doesn't work. We've talked about the regulatory burden here in the province of Ontario. Maybe they want to give \$5,000

towards a \$50,000 job and that job can be to fill out forms, because between that party wanting to do that and that party and its forms, this is where we are. We're in a situation where we have, what, 500,000 or 600,000 regulations governing SMEs, small and medium enterprises in the province of Ontario. You go over to British Columbia and you're talking about half that many. It's manageable at least; probably too many there as well, but manageable. Not for us.

Corporate welfare, which I've been talking about, just plain doesn't work. We have—and on this, the NDP and our party can agree 100%—a very serious jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. We have jobs numbers coming out—I guess it's this Friday—and my friend from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, as our economic development critic, will be talking about them on Friday. I don't like to bet against the province of Ontario; I never do. We all value this province. I want to tell my Liberal friends that I hope that on Friday they end this horrible run that we've been through, because for 63 straight months this province has lagged the entire set of provinces and territories in Confederation on EI. On Friday, I would expect, if the trend continues, that we'll be at 64. I will applaud if it's the end of that run. I can tell you that.

The way to fix the problem of the jobs crisis is to give businesses the tools that they need to create private sector jobs. That's how you do it. That means letting them grow, whether that means hiring new employees right away or investing in machinery, as I mentioned, or infrastructure immediately. Businesses know best what they need and when they need it. Businesses know that. Businesses know that because businesses are run by people who have taken their best shot. They've taken all that God has given them intellectually, they've taken their training from elementary school right through to post-secondary and they're applying it, and that's what we want to stimulate in the province of Ontario.

Putting conditions on businesses, such as the condition the NDP is proposing, is only a short-term, band-aid solution. It's a few bucks to go away. If you hand somebody 10% of—take a median-level entry job, \$30,000 or \$35,000; the business is going to get \$3,000 or \$3,500 a year for two years and then it's going to be gone. That doesn't stimulate anything. Save the money and find a better way. That's what I have to say to my friends in the NDP. That's what I have to say to my friends on the government side. I hope over the course of time, in debates like this, we can arrive at a situation where we can all come together and figure this out, because 600,000 people going wanting in the province of Ontario is an inappropriate approach.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's interesting listening to the government's perspective and the official opposition's perspective. Of course, I prefer our perspective. It's because we have a minority government here that we can all share those perspectives. The voters in 2011 asked for a minority government. They asked for us to all listen

to each other and to come up with the best possible plans that we can make, with input from each party, and deliver on jobs as one of the topics we're talking about today.

I have some research that I did here, and I want to go through a list of some companies that are going outside of Ontario. They've closed shop or they're going to close shop. I'm not sure if some of these have had corporate tax credits or not, but the point is, they're leaving Ontario. We need to have a jobs plan in this budget to keep companies here in Ontario and create jobs.

First on the list is J.M. Smucker Co., which closed its Bick vegetable processing facility in Dunnville and tank farm in Delhi in 2011. Siemens AG closed its gas turbine manufacturing plant in Hamilton in 2010. PPG Industries, a manufacturer of high-tech coatings, closed its plants in Clarkson and Owen Sound in 2009.

I'm going through this list because I'd like it recorded. I'd like to record the actual individual companies—it's just not numbers; it's not that we've created 350,000 jobs or there are 550,000 people out of work; it's the actual names to the companies that are just recently leaving in the last three years.

Electro-Motive in my riding, a subsidiary of Caterpillar, closed its plant in London in 2012. Abbott Labs in Brockville, a producer of liquid nutrition formulas, will close its plant in 2012. Parker-Hannifin, a manufacturer of industrial seals for automotive aerospace and oil and gas markets, closed its plant in Orillia in 2009. Honeywell, a manufacturer of automotive filters, will close its Stratford plant in 2012. Maple Leaf Foods closed its chicken processing plant in Ayr, Ontario, in 2012, and it will close other processing plants in Kitchener, Hamilton and Toronto by the end of 2014. And Ford closed its St. Thomas plant in 2011.

This is the reality of what we're facing today as companies are closing and moving out of Ontario. This budget lacks a job creation plan. We, the NDP, feel that it hasn't been working, that these corporate tax cuts haven't created jobs, and that's what our leader, Andrea Horwath, has said today. So we need to do more.

I also have some information—I found it really interesting, the research that I got. It's a report that I got called What Did Corporate Tax Cuts Deliver? It's a background report for Corporate Tax Freedom Day 2012. On page 5 of this report, the headline is, "Corporate Tax Cuts and Real Corporate Investment."

"KPMG ranks Canada's corporate taxes as the lowest in the G7. Proponents of ever-lower corporate taxes argued that the money corporations saved from lower taxes would be reinvested in real assets such as new factories, new machinery and equipment, and training, thus boosting economic growth and productivity and helping create more and better jobs; however, this is not what happened. Real investment has languished while profitable corporations have been paying out much more in dividends to shareholders and accumulating more financial assets."

So it's not working. Lowering corporate taxes or giving tax cuts to corporations is not making employers

create jobs or better jobs, boosting the economy and getting new machinery, training—getting new equipment. It's not helping. The report then goes on to say:

“While high levels of private investment are important, corporate tax cuts are a costly and ineffective way to raise real business investment. A detailed study for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives ... by economist Jim Stanford shows that corporate tax cuts since the late 1980s have greatly increased corporate cash flow, while real business investment in building, and in machinery and equipment, has actually fallen as a share of the economy.

“As corporate taxes have been cut, corporate after-tax cash flow has risen, but an increasing portion of that cash has been used to pay down debt, to buy up shares and to increase dividends. The share of after-tax corporate cash flow which has been reinvested in company operations has fallen significantly.”

Last is the section that they summarize with “According to Statistics Canada, total corporate cash reserves of private non-financial corporations grew from \$157 billion in the second quarter of 2001 to \$477 billion in the second quarter of 2011.”

It's not working. Companies are not taking those lower corporate tax advantages and creating jobs and investing back in Ontario. They're taking those corporate tax cuts and they're putting it in their coffers and they're saving the money. They're not reinvesting in Ontario, in Ontarians, to create jobs. So our job plan is to get that moving. It's to stimulate the economy, getting corporations to reinvest, with tax incentives, so that we can produce jobs and get people back to work and reward companies that are productive.

1700

The member opposite—I'm not sure of his riding right now—talked about when he was in business and he was going to hire three people, and the government at the time had a tax credit of \$10,000 per person he hired. In the same breath, he said, “But we didn't need that money.” On principle, if a business doesn't need to take advantage of a government program, I don't think they should. I think if you can do it on your own and you're independent—that program was there for those businesses that needed that boost, that wanted to have those new jobs created but needed that help to permanently put those jobs in Ontario. So, when we talk about principles, if there's a government program that's available, if someone doesn't need to use it, then don't. Leave it there for those who are going to be accessing it when they need it.

I also wanted to address the fact that London—Fanshawe has one of the highest unemployment rates, hovering at about 10%. In my riding, people are asking for the government to come up with solutions to get people back to work.

Again, as we talked about before, having a tax credit that specifically helps those companies that are ready to increase productivity and create jobs in Ontario—that investment in tax credits is much more promising as a way to stimulate critical investments in plants and ma-

chinery, because they provide increased cash flow that is directly targeted to investment.

A training tax credit will reward employers who invest in on-job-training. If we want to create prosperity and ensure a strong economic future, people need to have the skills to perform the jobs. Having them retrained and giving them that tax incentive will help businesses get those highly skilled workers and keep the jobs here in Ontario, as opposed to having corporate tax cuts for those companies who poach our jobs.

Speaker, the way to go is not the same status quo; that's not working. We actually need to sit and think about changes that are going to make a difference, practical ways to get people back to work, and a practical thing to do is, if a job creator actually puts someone to work, that's when the reward should be given, not before.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for his advice—

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's no problem. Any time.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. It's worth the price.

I just think it's a good opportunity, with this motion, to really discuss a very relevant and pragmatic issue that we face in Ontario, and that is people working and people that are unemployed and what we can do to find ways whereby government can do its role to ensure that we do everything we can to encourage employment growth.

I commend the NDP for bringing this forward, because it is important to have these hard looks at different approaches to this issue that we face in Ontario.

I have an interesting riding, which is a real microcosm of this issue. My riding has an area, the Upper Dufferin Village, which has some very, very unique manufacturers that have been in business—some go back six generations. They are still manufacturing; they're still in retail; they are still making things that are Canadian. I want to do everything I can to ensure that these Canadian employers, who employ Canadians, local people, and also export some of their products and have that made-in-Canada label on it, get all the help they can from government. I wish that somehow, looking at incentives like this tax credit incentive, we could incent those entrepreneurs, those businesses, that do manufacture products that are Canadian.

I have the iconic Roots factory still in my riding. It started in 1973. They employ about 200 people directly in the factory. They make boots, purses, jackets; they make all kinds of clothing apparel. Roots is really a Canadian success story. They even got the contract to supply the American Olympic team in the winter Olympics with all their outfits. They were wearing Roots outfits. That's a Canadian company. As you know, they also supplied the Canadian Olympic team with clothing apparel. Roots employs over 2,000 people in the GTA above the 200 people that manufacture in the plant on Caledonia, just north of Lawrence.

Those are the kinds of success stories that we have to take a lesson from. We have to encourage and support

that these Canadian-based companies are given all the support to employ more Canadians and to encourage Canadians to buy their products too.

I have another interesting example. I have an interesting maker of suits and shirts and clothing that employs about 130 people on Wingold Avenue. They make suits. They've got an amazing technology. What they do is, you can go to any shop and the tailor in the shop could measure you for a suit, send it by email on computer to the shop on Wingold Avenue, and they can make a tailor-made suit for you, all from the computer. The cutting of the suits and clothing is all done by computer by these incredibly talented people. Plus, they have people still sewing the old-fashioned way.

Do you know what the owner of that factory said? He said that the amazing thing is that the people he employs are people who would probably not be employed anywhere else but in that shop. Many of them, their English isn't perfect, but they are very highly skilled people. They're able to perform their craft right there in Toronto not far from their home.

Another company you may have heard of is Canada Goose. This is an iconic Canadian company that has had incredible success. You've seen the jackets all over the place. Canada Goose is now expanding into a bigger factory because they've been so successful in selling these Canadian-made coats all over the world. They are expensive. It's amazing to see kids spend 600 or 700 bucks for these coats, but they are Canadian made and they're a Canadian success story: Canada Goose.

Another example is Barrymore Furniture Inc. This is one of the finest furniture manufacturers, I think, in Canada. They employ all these craftspeople making Canadian furniture. It's a union shop. I think it's the United Steelworkers that are in there. They give people good wages, and it's an excellent, quality product.

I want to find a way of incenting and encouraging these kinds of factories to stay in business, expand and employ. We also have to ensure that we do whatever we can to support them, but also remind people that it's important to make that Canadian choice when we shop, and not enough of us do that.

I went to my local Home Hardware on Dufferin. Joe at the local Home Hardware said, "There's a good story for you." He said that there was a fertilizer product for lawns, and it really was the number one seller in Canada. It was Scotts, and it comes from Marysville, Ohio. He said that Home Hardware have a policy where they try and encourage Canadian-made goods. So they found a supplier—I think it's in Kitchener. I think it's Golfgreen or whatever the product is, but it's Canadian-made. It employs people. So Home Hardware is now selling the Canadian-made fertilizer, and they've increased sales of this product by \$10 million. That means that those people making that Canadian fertilizer—probably the potash comes from Saskatchewan or whatever. So there's an example. What Joe at Home Hardware was telling me was that he's noticing that people are coming in and saying—and that's not only his shop, but at Home

Hardwares all across Ontario—"Listen, we want the Canadian product," because they relate buying the Canadian product to Canadian jobs.

1710

Being in this place, I don't think we've ever sort of promoted that, whether it was a Conservative government or our government. We don't promote or support our Canadian expertise, our Canadian entrepreneurship, enough. We have to try and do whatever we can to encourage the crafting, and, you know, we shouldn't just judge products by—I love the fact that we've got our Canadian auto manufacturers. Even though they may make an American car, at least men and women are working here on our side making them. But we also have to go beyond that.

I know that as Canadians we are very, very innovative. I just think of another example. I remember there were these two sisters at Dupont and Ossington. They had a little bake shop in the back of a variety store; Mary is one sister, and I think the other sister is Grace. Anyway, from that shop they went to an industrial area with about 20 employees. They have just leased, I think, a new 20,000-square-foot factory to bake desserts, cakes, that will employ about 300 people. Those are good jobs and they are the finest products and we shouldn't diminish them because they are not hard products. They are products made by Canadians, Canadian artisans, and I think those are also employers or companies that deserve some kind of support for their initiative in giving people employment opportunities and giving people an opportunity to essentially manifest their skill set, their craft.

The one thing we have here in Ontario that I think is amazing is the talent level—okay, I'm about to finish—of our people. I mean, if you look around, whether it be construction, whether it be in the trades, whether it be in the creative arts that relate to employment, we've got people that are extremely talented. So we've got this amazing power of the human spirit who are skilled, who are willing to work, eager to work. As government, we have to find the best way possible of giving them that opportunity and also rewarding those who give people a chance to work, to show off their skill set, and make sure that they are able to feed their families and contribute to Canada, as they all want to do.

So I'm very interested in seeing ways that we, as the government, as this Legislature, can promote Canadian jobs, local jobs, and at the same time not encourage people to shop in Buffalo all the time. Shop on this side of the border. Save local jobs. Buy Canadian when you can. We can't stop all the Walmart shopping or all the Buffalo shopping, but please, shop more on this side of the border. Keep your money here; keep our jobs here. Thank you.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to talk a little about our tax credit motion that was put forward this morning by our leader.

In my riding, close to 12,000 manufacturing jobs had been lost over the last 14 years in the year ending 2010. The vast majority of jobs that ended up being created in that same 14-year period are retail, accommodation and service types of jobs—not jobs that are paying \$20 or \$25 an hour; likely jobs that are paying minimum wage, \$11 or \$12 per hour.

Jobs don't get created with corporate tax cuts, and they don't get created by decreasing regulation. They get created by investing in employees, in employees' training. I heard yesterday the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities saying that we have so many unskilled workers, 600,000 people laid off, but many of them don't have the skills to do the jobs that employers require. Well, in fact, the programs that this government has don't support 600,000 jobs. The Second Career program, for example, only supports 22,000 people, but we have 600,000 people unemployed here.

I heard the member from Thornhill talking about our differences in ideology as I came into the room here. Yes, we do have differences in ideology. I would say that, in fact, their cousins or their brothers and sisters at the federal level have just impacted that jobs crisis in an even more severe way. In fact, since 2006, the number of temporary workers has doubled in Canada, to 300,000 people.

I was reading an article today in the Hill Times from May 7, and you may want to go back and have a look at. In fact, the government has introduced immigration policies. They've actually changed the rules. There's no cap any longer on the four years that temporary immigrants can actually work in this country. When we talk about temporary immigrants, we're not talking about just the people who are working on our fruit farms during the summer. We're talking about people who work in nursing homes, people who work in our abattoirs, people working at Tim Hortons and Canadian Tire, people working at hotels, any workplace where employers say they can't find a Canadian employee who will work. Well, I can tell you, I have all kinds of friends and people in my riding who can't get a job in a number of these areas.

Disturbingly, they also set out a new announcement that wage rules won't apply to these temporary foreign workers. In fact, employers have the right to pay these temporary foreign workers 15% less than they would pay a permanent or Canadian worker. How much less can you get than minimum wage in some of these jobs? This is the PCs at the federal level who have actually introduced this new wage trend. It guarantees a downward trend to everyone, not just the people that are temporary workers.

The reforms didn't include a cap. The rule guarantees two things: (1) that the employers can minimize the cost of churn; and (2) a permanent temporary class of workers is created, keeping wages down and expectations low for everyone. So cheaper labour will benefit some employers in the short term, but in the long term it will affect our

economy. It will slow purchasing power and it will slow our growth to allow this to happen.

This year alone—actually, last year, 2011—191,000 temporary immigrant workers entered Canada, and they're working in those jobs that I just talked to you about. So I don't think that the Liberals' current plans by giving corporate tax cuts is working. I think you need to turn your mind to our tax credit plan, and I think that the Ontario PCs need to be talking to their partners at a federal level about what they're going to be doing to our economy.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand today and talk about an issue that's important to my riding of Davenport and to ridings across the province, and stand in support of our leader, Andrea Horwath, who's talking about creating jobs in this province, and a real strategy that will deliver jobs here.

What we hear from both the government and the official opposition is basically the same old thing. We refer to it as neo-liberalism sometimes, or neo-conservatism, but there's nothing new about it. This is the same thing we've been talking about for 30 years, and it's not working. I think that the public is catching on. I think across Canada people know that this is not working, know that it's time to turn the page. Young people, in particular, know that there are no good jobs, and that we've lost billions of dollars in this kind of reckless corporate tax scheme. These reckless tax cuts have gone on for years, and it means that we, as young people, have to pay the price for that.

Young people graduating from school have record debt. They've paid more on their tuition than any generation before them. They come out and they have to work in the service industry, and they're lucky to make \$10.25 an hour. So we know it's not working, and we know we need to turn the page and do something different.

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I think that we need to think about a practical way to do this. The Minister of Economic Development was saying, "How are we going to do this? How are we going to pay for this jobs plan?" We know that we're giving away—last year it was \$2 billion, I believe, in corporate tax cuts that had no strings attached. We want \$250 million to support people who are actually going to create a job here in Ontario.

We've seen this neo-liberalism; we've seen this neo-conservatism. We've seen it under Liberals like Paul Martin. We see it now. We saw it with Thatcher 25 years ago. We've seen Milton Friedman. These are not new ideas. A new idea would be actually building a province that creates jobs here, that creates infrastructure. We can do this, but we need to pick a real, serious plan on how to do this.

I was interested to listen to the member from Thornhill talking about winners and losers and that the government should just get out of the way. What I see is a govern-

ment that has gotten out of the way and created a lot of people who are not winning in this province. I think we have a responsibility as government to stand up and to make sure that there are fewer people who are losing.

We want to share this—I'm a good sharer, and I'd like to share with my brother here in the third party, so I will extend my time to him.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion.

Let me start with some facts. I like to have some facts on the record, because I think it's important, as we're having a debate in this House, that we don't stray from facts, because facts don't lie; facts are straightforward.

So, a lot of talk about jobs, which is a very important conversation which I think is of interest to all of us, for the whole province of Ontario and for our specific communities. Where are we on jobs? Let's get that record straight. Speaker, since the recessionary low, employment in Ontario has grown by almost 300,000 net jobs, the majority of which are in industries paying above-average wages. The majority of them are also full-time jobs.

The unemployment rate has declined from a recessionary high of 9.4%. Remember, the recession started around 2008 and hit the peak in 2009, when Ontario saw an unemployment rate of 9.4%. That unemployment rate has declined to 7.4% today. Why? Because we are creating jobs because of the economic policies of the McGuinty government in the province of Ontario. Just last month alone, according to Statistics Canada, employment in Ontario rose by over 46,000 jobs—in March—all full-time, and more than half of the jobs that were created in Canada that month. So we are still the leading job creator in all of Canada by creating the majority of the jobs right here in the province of Ontario. Speaker, since October 2003, our economy has created about 555,000 net new jobs, and this is taking into account the jobs that were lost during the recession. So I think it's really important to note what is taking place.

There are all kinds of ideas about tax credits and what those tax credits should look like, and the idea that the NDP is putting forward is definitely worth looking at, no ifs, ands or buts about it. We need to make sure and see what the details of the idea are. We haven't heard any details from the NDP. I think that's the interesting part. We've spent this whole afternoon debating about the tax credit, but we just keep hearing the fact that we need a tax credit that will help job creators. Well, I agree; I think we all agree. But what does that mean? What does that tax credit look like?

We've already got a lot of tax credits on the books, tax credits like the film and television tax credit, which has created about 30,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. That helps create jobs. Do we support that or not? I think that's a valid question to ask.

We also have the apprenticeship training tax credit, which is helping apprentices across the province. That helps create jobs. I think it's worth looking at.

We have the co-op education tax credit. I'm sure the NDP supports the co-op education tax credit, because it really enables job creation within our sector.

We have the Ontario business research institute tax credit. We have the Ontario innovation tax credit. We have the Ontario research and development tax credit. We have the Ontario resource tax credit. And the list goes on and on. It's because all these tax credits are there to ensure that we are creating jobs.

So the idea is worth looking at, no ifs ands or buts about it, but let's figure out exactly the shape and form that idea is going to take. That is why we all agreed—the NDP and the Liberals agreed—to have the jobs and prosperity council look at this idea of a tax credit, which will help create jobs, and report back by February 2013.

Now, that's what we should be doing. Let's make decisions which are based on evidence. Let's just not get trapped in ideology and the socialism and capitalism discussion which has been taking place this afternoon. That doesn't help people, that doesn't help people at all. I think what people need to know is, "How is it going to help me," and the best way to determine that is by relying on evidence.

So let's get experts, who will be part of the jobs and prosperity council, to have a look at this tax credit and give us advice. We can then work together, as we agreed, to see what this tax credit may be and what it's going to achieve.

Now here's the big reason why I'm not going to support this particular motion. The reason is as follows: Where I come from, a deal is a deal is a deal. A deal was made between the NDP and the government to take this idea of a tax credit and study it further. Let's see what evidence shows us. Let's see how it is shaped—not let's run around that whole agreement and come up with a motion which says, "Create that tax credit now."

Now, you know, maybe I just have a better, more simple sense of what an agreement looks like. But an agreement is something that you agree on and then you follow through. I think in this case the NDP is not, in my humble opinion, playing fair when it comes to what was agreed on. Let's make sure that we have something that is put into place that is really going to work, because that was something we agreed on. So you stand for principle, you stand for fairness; I think that's fairly principled and fair.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We stand for democracy.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: And democracy too. I think it's probably fair that in democracy, when two parties shake hands, we follow through on that.

I think what we're seeing is some abdication from that and trying to have it all ways, which is maybe okay for a third party to do—and they enjoy that prerogative. But you know what? Sitting on this side, when you've got the responsibility of governing, when you've got the responsibility of making decisions which are responsible, which

are fair and actually going to produce results and help people, it means that we ensure that we make decisions based on evidence.

So I say to you and I urge you—and that's my reason for not voting for this motion. I think it's worth looking into it. I look forward to what we agreed on; that is, the jobs and prosperity council to study this idea and give us advice. I think you should be honouring that part of the deal as well because I think that just makes you look good, because this does not really bode well for the NDP. I understand you have to play your own politics.

But you know what? On this side of the floor, we're not playing politics with people's lives. We're not going to play politics with people's jobs. We need to make sure that at the end of the day we are helping create the jobs. We are helping to grow our economy, like the way the jobs have been growing in this province; like how we created 46,000 new jobs in March; like how we have created 300,000 net new jobs since the recessionary high because of the economic policies that have taken place. That's what has been part of our budget to ensure that we are strengthening the economy, creating jobs and maintaining the gains in health care and education.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre. He is indeed entertaining. I also want to congratulate him on the birth of his child yesterday and wish him all the best.

I am so pleased to talk about our tax credit for job creators because what we are proposing here is a shift. It's a change. It's out of the box. You guys got to listen very carefully.

It's getting away from the blind faith, closed-door, blinders-on, *laissez-faire* approach to tax code in the province. I want to talk to you about *laissez faire, en français*. The translation directly is "Let it be." It might be a really good Beatles song, but it is not good economic policy for the province. So what we're proposing here is very, very simple and the details are simple as well. You're a business, you're going to make a new hire, you're going to employ someone. We're going to help you: It's a \$5,000 tax credit to incentivize you taking on that person.

Here's what else it helps. It helps those who aren't ready to employ, those small businesses in our communities that really have reached their limit in terms of employment. How does it help them? Because there's another person in their community who now has a job, who gets to go and support their local small business. It's something that sounds simplistic but it actually can work.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Here are the details, member. It is very simple. Hire someone, get a tax credit—very different from what has been happening right now where you're giving money away to companies that are outsourcing, downsizing, offshoring their production, offshoring their labour sources. That is a slap in the face to the businesses in this province that are actually hiring. If

you vote against this bill today, you are voting against those business that are doing the things right in this province and taking on the burden in this province.

The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan hit on Keynesian economics. He hit on a figure of structure spending on the province, \$80 billion—I forget the figure. It's real basic Keynesian economics. It involves an active, strategic approach. That's what we're talking about here: a government that is willing to do the lifting and to take a strategic approach in their tax code to make sure that people are getting value for dollar.

Also, we proposed another incentive that the government adopted: our modest tax increase on folks that are making over \$500,000 a year—supported by 78% of Ontarians. That's an idea that we got from our communities. This is another idea that we're getting from our business communities. It's something that you should really listen to, something that you can easily adopt, something that will have broad appeal and something that, ultimately, will work, something that hasn't been done by this Liberal government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will cede my time to the honourable leader of our party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very proud to have had a chance to share this debate with my colleagues in the NDP caucus, people who are very concerned about getting somewhere in this province in job creation. Unfortunately, the Liberal way has not worked. We don't see the jobs being created; we see over 500,000 people still unemployed in this province. The HST has not worked. Across-the-board corporate tax cuts have not worked. It's very apparent we need to find a new way.

So yes, we did offer the Liberals a new way. And yes, in the conversation that we had around the budget, they said they'd consider it. All New Democrats are doing is realizing the history of the way the Liberals operate. We're reminding them today that they made a commitment. We want to see that committee struck, we want to see this tax credit implemented here in Ontario, and if they have the convictions that their Premier had when we struck that deal, they'll be supporting this motion, because it only reiterates what we already agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1734 to 1744.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please. Thank you.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Schein, Jonah
Bisson, Gilles	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Natyshak, Taras	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Prue, Michael	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Harris, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Rod	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	O'Toole, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jones, Sylvia	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Klees, Frank	Piruzza, Teresa
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Leone, Rob	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie

Craitor, Kim	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Shurman, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Todd
Dhillon, Vic	McDonell, Jim	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	McKenna, Jane	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Thompson, Lisa M.
Duncan, Dwight	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McNeely, Phil	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 69.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is no further business. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1747.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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