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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 9 May 2007

Mercredi 9 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 9 May 2007

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 9 mai 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

VISITORS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to extend a word of welcome to the visitors who are present in the chamber today to join us for our proceedings this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS**

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today to talk about the ever-increasing stench of Minister Colle's slush fund, because the web of this scandal is growing every day. Minister Colle himself said this in 2004:

"We need a stronger Provincial Auditor who will in essence be a watchdog for the people of Ontario.... It's a wonderful tradition that we have an auditor who ... can report to the people of Ontario....

"I think that's good for democracy and good for the finances of this province."

But, hang on, there's more. Minister Colle added:

"I think the people of Ontario have a lot of confidence in the Auditor General....

"The Provincial Auditor will now have the power to go and ensure that we're getting value for money and the taxpayer is getting value for money."

We know that Liberal policy means saying one thing and doing another. But I'm holding him to his word and saying that if Minister Colle really and truly feels so strongly about the role of Auditor General Jim McCarter, let him do his job and get to the bottom of this slush fund scandal—or are your words simply Liberal rhetoric?

It's becoming more and more clear that transparency and accountability is far too much to ask from Dalton McGuinty. Ontario taxpayers aren't fooled, and they have a right to know. The time is long overdue to call in the auditor to investigate this ordeal.

Let me close with another statement made by Mr. Colle while in opposition: "This is the message: Be accountable."

John Tory and the PC caucus couldn't agree more.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I am pleased to speak today to honour the success of the On-Track Pre-Employment program in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. This month marks the third anniversary of the program at the corner of Kennedy Road and Eglinton Avenue in one of Toronto's identified priority neighbourhoods, Kennedy Park.

On-Track's regional director, Marie Heron, founded On-Track in 1999 in another high-needs community, Jane and Finch, to serve single mothers receiving social assistance. It was the first program funded by the government of Canada that was designed to facilitate Ontario Works clients. Next month it is celebrating its 100th client group.

In its first year of operation in Kennedy Park, On-Track saved the city of Toronto more than \$500,000 in social assistance payments by moving women from welfare to sustainable employment. On-Track clients have been successfully hired by large employers such as the Royal Bank, TD Waterhouse, the Toronto Transit Commission, Re/Max and the province of Ontario.

Now part of our government's successful Employment Ontario network, On-Track is working with employers and community partners to expand and strengthen its services to maximize the value of program dollars.

As the local member representing many clients being served in Kennedy Park, I'm extremely proud of the service provided by On-Track, which allows women to achieve their career and life goals. I am equally proud of our government's commitment to providing real solutions for those on social assistance to find meaningful and sustainable employment.

I congratulate Marie Heron of On-Track and wish her well in her worthwhile endeavour.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Today's Toronto Sun carried a story briefly outlining Energy Minister Duncan's use of a government plane to fly himself and six others to a conference in Thunder Bay and back to Toronto. A spokesman in the minister's office claimed that the cost was the same as that of the use of a commercial flight. That is blatantly inaccurate, to be polite. Costs of commercial flights are dramatically lower, and use of Air Canada or WestJet would have saved taxpayers thousands of dollars.

Misuse of tax dollars and disingenuous justification for it is becoming a trademark feature of this McGuinty Liberal government. Why would the minister need four staffers to travel with him? Why would he need two police officers? Why was it so necessary for him to get back to Toronto to chair cabinet?

As a former Solicitor General and a former chair of cabinet, I don't believe there are reasonable answers to those questions. I think it's all about this Liberal government's lack of respect for tax dollars, starting at the top, and this minister's grandiose view of himself as someone terribly important and deserving of a large entourage. That's what this boils down to: lack of respect for tax dollars and a minister with an over-inflated ego or a presidential complex.

The people of Ontario are catching on to this Liberal bunch, and their days are numbered.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise today to talk about the good work being done through the Healthy Schools recognition program, a joint venture between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health Promotion. The object of the Healthy Schools recognition program is to promote and celebrate healthy behaviours and practices in Ontario's publicly funded schools, the concept being that healthy schools can have a positive impact on student health and learning.

Beginning last summer, all schools were challenged to start developing a healthier learning environment for students. By way of accepting the Healthy Schools challenge, a school declares its commitment to work toward being a healthier school. This program has been incredibly successful. Sixteen schools in the riding of Huron-Bruce have accepted the government's Healthy Schools challenge to do at least one more thing to become healthier.

This past Friday, I was on hand at Holmesville Public School to present the staff and students with a pennant commemorating their dedication and enthusiasm toward taking up this challenge. This program is yet another way in which the McGuinty government is improving the province's education system by making a positive impact on student health and learning for all Ontario students. I can tell you that the enthusiasm at Holmesville Public School was reflected in my other 16 schools. The students are up for the challenge and looking forward to it and will embrace their healthier environment.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): The lifeblood of the north is found in the forestry and mining sectors, and it is a result of the policies of the McGuinty government that is the downfall of those sectors and is adding to the migration out of the north.

Wednesday last, I had the privilege to tour North America's deepest base metal mine in Timmins:

Xstrata's Kidd Creek. Every miner I had the ability to speak with asked me the same question: Why is it that the current Liberal government is chasing away foreign investment by changing the taxation laws for Ontario's first and, as stated by Jim from De Beers, probably only, diamond mine? This was from the miners who extract copper, zinc, silver and platinum—not diamonds. They know that their jobs and economy are heavily dependent on foreign investment.

As stated by Jim Gowans, president and CEO of De Beers Canada, "this government has now sent a signal to the international investment community that Ontario is not a stable place to invest." This government is telling the proud citizens of northern Ontario that investments by private industry in their communities, companies that will assist with education and training, keeping youth in the north—that Dalton McGuinty will punish those willing to step up and support Ontario's north.

De Beers has invested over \$640 million, with more to come—well, maybe. This investment represents over 1,000 northern jobs, with hundreds going to the First Nations community, and over \$147 million in aboriginal businesses alone, and that's to date. Also, the investment represents \$6.7 billion in GDP for Ontario, with \$4.2 billion for northern Ontario.

When will the McGuinty government stop punishing the north and let the northern lifeblood of the mines and forests flourish again?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

1340

EDUCATION FOR THE DEAF

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Today I am pleased to rise as critic for disabilities to discuss issues surrounding education for the deaf in Ontario.

Recently, the Coalition of Concerned Parents and members of the community held a demonstration at the Minister of Education's office to bring attention to the plight of deaf students. They will have another rally here in front of the Legislature on Friday, May 11, at 10 a.m. to support deaf children's right to sign-language education. I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to join that demonstration.

This coalition has some serious concerns about education for the deaf that are being ignored by this government. Most problematic is that deaf children are being denied access to sign-language education in Ontario schools. No policy has been set for students who are not succeeding in spoken-language programs. It is true that some children do succeed in spoken-language education; however, what happens to the children who do not have access to sign-language education? What happens is that it is really problematic in that, the coalition has found, there are more and more deaf children turning to the Ontario disability support program and Ontario Works.

People with disabilities face many obstacles. The deaf should have the right to learn American Sign Language if that is the education that works best for them. The On-

tario government must ensure that all people, regardless of their various abilities, are not prevented from achieving their potential.

Again, I encourage my colleagues to come out here on Friday and support these parents in support of their own children, who require American Sign Language to be taught.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): In my riding we celebrate business excellence, and so does the McGuinty government. Since its humble beginning 11 years ago, over 53 businesses have been honoured by their peers and the community through the Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

The awards recognize outstanding entrepreneurs, businesses, organizations and individuals who demonstrate a dedication to their product or service and an ongoing commitment to their employees and the community.

The 11th annual business excellence award recipients were announced at a gala banquet on Friday, May 4 at the Arden Park Hotel in Stratford. This gala brought together over 300 Stratford and area business leaders and media personalities. I had the privilege of representing the Honourable Harinder Takhar, Ontario's first Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

I would like to congratulate these award winners: Rheo Thompson Candies for retail; Cooper-Standard Automotive for manufacturing; the Festival Inn for tourism/hospitality; Wightman Telecom for service, professional and commercial; Tabatha Morrison of Tabworks Documentation Services for young entrepreneur; the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Stratford and district for community service; and Elaine Genyn for winning the personal excellence award.

As well, I would like to thank co-chairs Bo Forbes and Shelley Windsor, who were involved in all of the committee work, for pulling off such a successful event.

As a small business person and as a proud member of the chamber, I want all of our members to share with us in the wonderful work that is happening in small business and the fact that we celebrate that.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I rise today to talk about the McGuinty Liberal government's leadership when it comes to our record on energy conservation and renewables.

The McGuinty Liberals are moving forward with our plan to fight climate change and have taken aggressive actions to ensure a sustainable future for Ontario's children. We've just announced the largest solar farm in all of North America: 40 megawatts, one of the biggest in the world. We're also the first jurisdiction in North America to phase out inefficient light bulbs. In terms of wind power, we are a national leader, with 415 mega-

watts, and by the end of 2008 there will be 1,300 megawatts of wind power in Ontario, an 80-fold increase.

I should remind the members opposite about the years under the two previous governments. Under the Tories, there was no new generation, and there was also a 127% increase in coal use. The NDP cancelled all conservation programs and also cancelled renewable projects, including the Conawapa project, a hydro power lifeline with Manitoba, which would have given us access to 1,250 megawatts of new generation.

The McGuinty Liberals have invested \$2 billion in conservation and we've brought on 3,000 megawatts of clean energy since 2003. We've also introduced the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, the first of its kind in Canada.

While we know there's always more to do in the fight against climate change, the McGuinty Liberals are taking action now for future generations.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I rise in the House today to speak about Ontario's most valuable resource—our water. The McGuinty Liberals have been leading the way on this and are committed to having the most comprehensive water protection program in North America. And we're taking the time to do it right. We have learned from the mistakes of the previous government and have put in place legislation to ensure that Ontario's drinking water is safe, clean and abundant for generations to come.

Our official opposition voted against the Clean Water Act, which implemented recommendations from the inquiry that their government caused. They also nominated a candidate this past weekend who is opposed to the government's clean water regulations. When you have a record of closing water-testing labs and slashing the Ministry of the Environment's budget, you would think that you would at least be in support of source water protection for all Ontarians. Apparently not.

We have implemented 12 of Justice O'Connor's recommendations and helped to implement an additional 22 of the recommendations, we have implemented the toughest training and certification rules in North America for operators of drinking water systems, we have hired 25% more water inspection staff and we are providing funding for source water protection to our communities.

All of us know that we have to keep looking ahead to ensure Ontario's water is safe.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce my mother, Sally Tabuns, and three friends of hers, Shirley Davis, Betty Tarka and Meta Rea from the Lime Ridge Mall coffee club.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I think we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee meeting times.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee meeting times. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that in addition to its regularly scheduled meetings, the standing committee on social policy be authorized to meet Monday, May 14, 2007, between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 171, An Act to improve health systems by amending or repealing various enactments and enacting certain Acts.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): In the spirit of co-operation, I know this one will have as much approval with the House.

I move that notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 9, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 346. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Di Cocco, Caroline	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Duncan, Dwight	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Chan, Michael	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Norm	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Munro, Julia	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	Tabuns, Peter
Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubuski, John
Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 38; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

NURSES

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's my pleasure to rise in my place today to celebrate National Nursing Week. This is an opportunity for all to reflect on and give thanks for the extraordinary contribution nurses make in diverse health care settings across our vast province.

Nurses are the heart and soul of our health care system. They are often the people with whom we have first contact when we have a health problem. Each and every day, nurses make a difference in people's lives, delivering care with skill, compassion, dedication and love.

The McGuinty government recognizes the invaluable contribution of nurses. That's why, since taking office, we have worked alongside our nurses and their leaders, sharing our vision of a health care system that makes Ontario the jurisdiction of choice for our health care workers.

Since coming to office in October 2003, we have invested \$300 million on initiatives to help our nurses flourish, and through major increases in health care spending, we have created 5,453 new nursing positions. In addition, another 1,625 are projected from our 2007-08 financial allocations.

Today I'm extremely proud to confirm that our government is fulfilling our commitment to create 8,000 new nursing positions in Ontario. By adding 1,200 new full-time registered practical nurse positions in the long-term-care sector, we will not only enhance Ontario's nursing force, but we will enhance the quality of care for our long-term-care residents.

Our government is providing annual funding of \$57.7 million to create these positions. There will be at least one of these new RPN positions created in each and every one of Ontario's 628 long-term-care homes.

This initiative will increase the number of direct nursing care hours received by residents. It will increase

the percentage of nurses working full-time in the long-term-care sector.

This is the latest initiative to demonstrate our commitment to strengthening the nursing profession in Ontario.

Today, it's a tremendous privilege for me to be able to introduce to the Ontario Legislature Ontario's new Chief Nursing Officer, Vanessa Burkoski. She's in the east gallery. She's accompanied by Dr. Joshua Tepper, our assistant deputy minister of health human resources, and her husband. Welcome, Vanessa.

Vanessa is a health care professional hailing from Windsor—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Hear, hear.

1400

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: —that's not in my notes; I apologize—who brings a wealth of professional experience and excellence to this position. Ms. Burkoski has worked in Ontario's health care system for more than two decades, in nursing leadership roles that have utilized not only her theoretical and clinical background but also her skills and expertise as a collaborator and negotiator working with stakeholders to achieve positive patient outcomes.

Our government has achieved much in the last few years to support our nurses. Let me quote Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of the Ontario Nurses' Association. Earlier this week, in the *Toronto Star*, she said:

"We have been working with the ... government" and "employers ... to bring nursing back up to the great profession it was before morale plummeted...."

"Solving everything in the complex health care system can't be done with the stroke of a pen and not done overnight."

Our government is on the right track to make Ontario the jurisdiction of choice for health care workers. In February, we announced our nursing graduate guarantee, promising that every nursing graduate in this province would be offered full-time employment in a hospital or long-term-care home, a mental health service provider and elsewhere in the community. We are one of only a couple of jurisdictions in the whole world to ever make such a promise to young nurses.

The initiative I am announcing today builds on the nursing graduate guarantee, and we anticipate that many of the new RPNs hired in long-term-care homes will be new nursing graduates taking advantage of our guarantee.

Our government is also supporting nurses by strengthening Ontario's health care system. That includes enhancing work environments for nurses and ensuring more educational and professional career opportunities, as well as purchasing modern hospital equipment such as patient lifts, electronic beds and safety alarms that not only improve working conditions for nurses but also improve patient safety.

We are also keeping late-career nurses in the profession so their skills and expertise can be shared with

younger nurses by those who have dedicated themselves to patients, in many cases for decades.

As I said, nurses are essential to building a better health care system. We're building that system, and today's announcement is a big part of that.

Thank you to Ontario's nurses.

WASTE DIVERSION

RÉACHEMINEMENT DES DÉCHETS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I am pleased to have this opportunity to report on the positive steps our government is taking to give Ontarians cleaner, greener, more environmentally friendly options.

As we all know, plastic bags are a fact of modern life. Just about every time we make a purchase, it usually involves carting something home in a plastic bag. In fact, here in Ontario, 80 plastic bags get used every second. That's close to seven million plastic bags every day. I continually hear stories from Ontarians about plastic bags littering the sides of our roadways, polluting our water, blocking our drain pipes. I hear from people who have cupboards overflowing with these bags, and they feel they have no options to deal with them. As a result, many of these plastic bags end up in our landfills. This is not simply acceptable.

Over the past few months, I have been working with progressive companies and associations to resolve this issue. There are a number of great initiatives already occurring, but more needs to be done. Giving consumers choice will make a big difference, and that's why I'm very proud that our government has brokered a voluntary agreement with environmental, retail, grocery and industry organizations that gives Ontarians more options to help them deal with the ubiquitous plastic bag.

Mieux encore, grâce à cette entente, les sacs en plastique seront moins nombreux dans notre quotidien au cours des cinq prochaines années. Je suis très fière de faire partie d'un gouvernement écologiste.

Nous tenons absolument à protéger l'environnement et nous nous employons de bien des façons à bâtir un avenir plus sain et plus respectueux de l'environnement, pour nos enfants et nos petits-enfants.

Even better, it ensures that we will see fewer bags altogether in the next five years. I'm proud to be part of a government that is a green government. We are serious about our stewardship, and we're working in many ways to build a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable future for our children and our children's children.

We know Ontarians care about making their province cleaner and greener. People everywhere, in communities across our province, are recognizing that this is a responsibility we all share. They realize we each need to do more to reduce our environmental footprint. Ontarians want to be part of the solution.

Nous savons que les Ontariens veulent rendre leur province plus propre et plus verte. Aux quatre coins de

l'Ontario, la population est consciente que c'est une obligation que nous devons assumer collectivement. Les Ontariens et Ontariennes savent que nous devons tous individuellement faire plus pour réduire notre empreinte sur l'environnement. Les Ontariens et Ontariennes veulent contribuer à la solution.

Our government is responding by taking action on many different fronts to reduce the amount of packaging going to our landfills. But we can't do it alone. We need to work with Ontario's progressive business leaders on our shared goals of reducing waste and increasing diversion through the three Rs.

Earlier today I was joined by representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, the Retail Council of Canada, the Recycling Council of Ontario, as well as the Canadian plastics industry to announce a new partnership that will help us dramatically scale back the use of plastic bags. This agreement is based on the three Rs hierarchy, with the focus on reduction.

We have set a goal to cut the use of plastic bags by half within five years. The agreement will help—

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Broten: Thank you. The agreement will help to broaden plastic bag recycling programs across the province and includes consumer education and initiatives to promote reduction, reuse and recycling of bags already in circulation. We need to see demonstrable progress on this issue. That's why the program also includes annual monitoring and public reporting to ensure programs are in place and goals are met.

Many smart business leaders have already stepped up to the plate. They know that being a green company is not only good for our environment; it makes good business sense and reaps huge dividends in promoting a company's image.

I want to acknowledge how important this partnership and its efforts are to our success in reducing waste and building a cleaner, healthier province.

Je désire souligner l'importance que représente ce partenariat pour réussir à produire moins de déchets et à bâtir une province plus verte et plus saine. C'est un grand pas en avant de voir le gouvernement, le secteur de l'alimentation et les groupes de défense de l'environnement coopérer pour atteindre des objectifs communs.

Having government, industry and environmental organizations working co-operatively on shared goals is an important step forward. We believe that it makes sense to work collaboratively, that shared responsibility is the preferred approach to finding solutions. I am confident of success. But this issue is too important. If I am not seeing significant progress on our target of 50% fewer plastic bags, I will deal with this issue through regulation.

The more we practise the three Rs by reducing the number of single-use plastic bags, expanding the use of reusable bags and encouraging consumers to recycle plastic bags, the more we will see real progress and a real reduction in plastic bags going to our landfills. All of these actions will help to reduce the amount of green-

house gases that goes into our atmosphere and contributes to climate change.

We need everyone working together to find effective, creative solutions. We're working together with business and building on our strengths to find effective, made-in-Ontario solutions that work and work well for everyone.

Toutes ces actions vont aider à réduire la quantité des gaz à effet de serre qui sont rejetés dans l'atmosphère et intensifient le changement climatique.

Nous devons tous unir nos efforts pour trouver des solutions ingénieuses et efficaces. Nous collaborons avec les entreprises et misons sur nos forces pour trouver des solutions tout ontariennes qui fonctionnent bien pour tout le monde.

Ontarians are eager and willing to do their part. By taking action, by working in partnership to give people better options and practical solutions, we can build cleaner, greener, more sustainable communities and a brighter and more successful future. That's the kind of future we all want to see.

1410

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS CHAMPIONNATS DE CURLING

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I would like to draw to members' attention in the gallery the 2007 world men's curling champions, all from the province of Ontario.

I want to take a moment to commend the efforts of Glenn Howard from Penetanguishene and his rink of third Richard Hart of Pickering, lead Craig Savill of Ottawa, coach Scott Taylor of Barrie, Brent Laing of Huntsville, who was not able to be with us, and Steve Bice of Sarnia, an alternate who also not able to be with us.

Leur impressionnante victoire au Championnat mondial Ford de curling masculin 2007 à Edmonton en avril a permis au Canada de remporter son 30^e titre mondial en curling masculin.

Their impressive win at the 2007 Ford World Men's Curling Championship in Edmonton in April gave Canada its 30th men's world curling title. The Glenn Howard rink delivered a crushing 8-3 final game win over Team Germany to secure gold and vault Canada into the top position in the world curling championship rankings.

In March, Glenn and his team recorded an impressive win over Newfoundland and Labrador in the final of the 78th Brier in Hamilton, which gave them a spot in the world event.

This was Glenn's first world championship as a skip. He has also figured prominently on two other world championship gold medal-winning teams. In fact, he was a member of the team skipped by his brother Russ Howard that won the 1987 and 1993 world championship titles.

Throughout his career Glenn has proudly represented Ontario and Canada and holds an impressive record of

achievement that today includes the 2007 world men's curling champion, the 2007 Brier champion, the 2006 Brier finalist, 1987 and 1993 world champion, 1987 and 1993 Brier champion, two-time Players' champion, and the four-time McCain/TSN Skins Game champion.

Glenn, Richard, Brent, Craig and Scott have all given Ontarians a great reason to be proud. They have given us more: They are valuable role models for curlers across the province and for all Ontarians, inspiring us to live active, healthy lives.

That's why support for amateur sport will continue to be a priority for the Ontario government. The McGuinty government recognizes the value of amateur sport and does this in a number of ways. In February, I had the real pleasure of announcing an impressive and substantial milestone for Ontario's amateur sport funding. In 2006-07, funding for the Quest for Gold program was close to \$10 million. That meant that more than 950 of Ontario's amateur athletes shared in almost \$7 million in direct financial assistance and \$3 million directed to competition and coaching.

Equally exciting is the fact that the McGuinty government committed another \$10 million to the Quest for Gold program in this year's budget. On hand for Minister Sorbara's budget were two young curlers from Manotick, Neil and Jamie Sinclair. I have no doubt that Neil and Jamie and hundreds of other young curlers across Ontario were watching Glenn's rink at the Brier and the world championships with dreams of future championships. We created the Quest for Gold program to make more of those dreams come true.

The Ontario government also provided close to \$12 million in other funding that touches amateur athletes, with \$7.6 million provided to our 62 provincial sport and multi-sport organizations like the Ontario Curling Association. The program also directly benefits the 2.4 million Ontarians who are members of these organizations, ranging from kids in organized leagues and adults in recreational activities to people at recognized competition levels, as well as our amateur athletes.

We want to build a healthier, stronger Ontario to give all Ontarians a chance to become more active and to achieve excellence, whether it's at the recreational level or in international arenas competitively. We are committed to supporting all of our athletes in their quest for excellence.

I again congratulate Glenn Howard, Richard Hart, Brent Laing, Craig Savill, Scott Taylor and Steve Bice for their hard work and competitive spirit in bringing home the gold. These gentlemen all had an opportunity to meet with their local MPPs, as well as Premier McGuinty. We're very proud of you. Thank you for representing Ontario and Canada so well. We look forward to seeing you in the Olympics in 2010. We know you're going to make it, Glenn. All the best. Way to go.

NURSES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Let me begin by congratulating Vanessa Burkoski. I'm glad

the government finally has decided to appoint a new provincial Chief Nursing Officer. Our government was very pleased, on the advice of the nurses, to originally create this position at the same time as we created 12,000 additional nursing positions and also created the nursing practitioner position.

However, if I take a look at this announcement—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the member.

Mrs. Witmer: As I said, we were very fortunate, working with nurses to create 12,000 positions and also the nurse practitioner position.

If I take a look at the headline here, I think it's a little premature for the government to be celebrating the creation of 8,000 new nursing positions when almost 3,000 of the 8,000 are not yet working, and of that 3,000 who are not working, at least half of them aren't going to be working until 2008. So it's a little premature to be celebrating.

This particular announcement is all about show. There is no detail. There is no plan for implementation. And I will tell you, the sector doesn't know how they can move forward without the detail. It's sadly lacking in any substance whatsoever.

WASTE DIVERSION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment's statement today. I must say from the outset that we applaud the fantastic work of the Recycling Council of Ontario, as well as the leadership shown by private industry in Ontario, large and small, who are working very hard to do their part to manage our environment.

But once again we see the Liberal environment minister this time—another day, another photo opportunity, another parade to jump in front of, pretending they're taking the lead, and, as if we have not seen enough, yet another last minute, feel-good election stunt with far-off dates and targets that are being kicked out the door before an election.

Let me quote the Toronto Star from today: "Ontario residents and businesses combined recycled only 25% of their trash last year. That's far behind the 2003 Liberal election promise to divert 60% of waste from landfills."

Dalton McGuinty and his team are not practising the three Rs. The only thing they're doing is the three Ds: duck, deflect and deny.

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I consider it an honour today to stand in this House and congratulate Team Glenn Howard on winning the world curling championship. Team Howard curls out of the Coldwater Curling Club, which is in my hometown. It's a town of 1,500 people. It's very seldom that we have a world champion in any particular area.

Not only the province of Ontario and Canadians, but I can't tell you how proud the people in north Simcoe are of this team. There are actually three communities—the town of Midland, the town of Penetanguishene and the village of Coldwater would all like to take credit for the world curling champions. But I can tell you that, leading up to the Ontario title and leading up to the Brier championship, people of all ages and all walks of life in north Simcoe were watching TV very closely and watching the final results.

I thought one of the neatest parts of that world curling championship was when Team Howard played off against Newfoundland for the Canadian title. They interviewed a former world champion, Russ Howard, who is the brother of Glenn, and they said, "Who are you cheering for"—because, if you recall, Russ was actually an Olympic champion. When they said, "Who are you cheering for—Newfoundland or Ontario?", of course he said, "Blood is thicker than Screech." I thought that was the highlight of the event.

I also want to pass on the congratulations I received today to pass on to Team Howard from the Honourable William G. Davis, a former Premier of Ontario. He knows a lot of people up in the Midland area because of his cottage.

Like all Ontarians, all Canadians and people in Simcoe North, we are very, very proud of your accomplishments. Keep up the good work, and we're going to see you winning the world Olympic gold medal in 2010.

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WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): This government made a promise in 2003 to divert 60% of waste from landfill by 2008. That was a promise, a five-year promise, and that was a promise that sank without a trace under the waves. I put in a freedom of information request to find the plan that was to deliver on that promise. Frankly, the researchers, those who are out there beating the bushes, going through the file cabinets, could not find a thing—gone. So today, again, another promise for action five years from now. That's two elections from now—not just this election, but the election in 2012.

Based on the history of broken promises on this file, people should not expect that the shopping bags issue is going to be resolved on the basis of today's statement.

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of New Democrats, I want to congratulate the members of the Glenn Howard rink, who are here at Queen's Park today, for your 2007 gold medal win at the Ford World Men's Curling Championship in Edmonton. It was a very impressive showing by a very impressive group, and both Ontario and Canada know that we can expect great things from you in the future. Good luck with everything that will come. We look forward to many more wins, as well, by the four of you.

NURSES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I also, on behalf of New Democrats, want to salute Ontario nurses today and acknowledge the tremendous contribution being made every day by all of them. Whether it's at the bedside in a hospital, providing nursing services in the home, caring for residents in long-term-care homes, working in a health care team, in a family health team or in a community health centre, or delivering health care services through public health units, nurses bring skill, expertise, care and compassion to patients and residents every day, and we are very lucky that they do so.

Now to today's announcement by the Minister of Health. In its desperation to pretend that it has met its election promise on hiring of new nurses, the Minister of Health says the money announced in the budget is going to result in the hiring of new nurses in long-term-care homes. This is completely contrary to comments that were made by Donna Rubin, executive director of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, on budget day. Ms. Rubin said, "While the budget contained \$14 million for the hiring of nurses in long-term care, the reality is that with no money to keep up with inflation, homes will be forced to lay off staff. Homes have been given about 50 cents a day to hire nurses when we needed over \$2 a day just to keep them. We will be laying off three nurses just to hire one." I suspect the residents and families believe Donna Rubin and not the Minister of Health.

It's that same desperation to pretend the government has met its commitment that has the government counting in new graduate internship positions as permanent positions this year. Last year the minister promised, "Every nursing graduate in Ontario will be offered a full-time job somewhere in Ontario." Further, "We are offering this job guarantee to every nursing student." By the time the program got announced, a full-time job guarantee was down to a full-time job opportunity. That doesn't give comfort at all to new graduates because, on the contrary, the government is paying for nursing placements in hospitals for six months. After that, the hospital has to pick up for the next six weeks, and if the graduate is really lucky, the hospital might have the money to actually hire that nurse. But again there's no guarantee that position is going to be full-time, part-time or casual.

That is why Candice Emerson, a fourth-year University of Windsor graduate student in nursing, saw through the government's spin and said, "Why not try to find a new job instead of doing the new-graduate initiative?" That is why Candice is off to work in a Calgary hospital full-time and not in Ontario.

This certainly doesn't meet the minister's big promise to new graduates of a full-time nursing job.

It's also that same desperation that has the government, today in its backgrounder, counting 2,800 future nursing jobs in the overall promise of 8,000, as if they were in place today. They aren't in place today. We don't know when they will be in place. We don't know if they

are ever going to be in place. But the government certainly hasn't met its commitment today.

What do nurses really want? Three things: They want my Bill 30, Safe Needles Save Lives, passed. They want it passed immediately. That's why they were here last week urging the government to get that done. That's why Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of ONA, has said, "We do not need to have this continued injury taking place in the health care workplace when there is an easy answer.... We believe it's really a no-brainer." It is. Pass Bill 30 now.

The nurses want assurance that N95 respirators will be made available to them in every hospital during the next flu pandemic, just as the late Justice Campbell urged this government to do. We don't have that certainty in place yet; we need to.

Finally, we need Bill 45 passed, which was put forward by my colleague Andrea Horwath, to make sexual harassment a part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act in the province of Ontario so that nurses can be assured that they won't be harassed on the job—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Speaker: I want to inform the House that last night 5,764 screaming Sudbury hockey fans cheered as the Sudbury Wolves beat the Plymouth Whalers 5-4 in overtime. The winning goal was scored by homegrown Justin Donati. The next game is tonight, and we hope to go back to Plymouth, Michigan, leading three games to one.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): A point of order on essentially the same subject, Speaker: I thought I should make public that I have today entered into a wager with Governor Eliot Spitzer of New York state regarding the outcome of the upcoming hotly contested hockey series between my beloved Ottawa Senators and the Buffalo Sabres. I should inform the House that I have put on the line a full month's supply of our world-famous Tim Hortons coffee; Governor Spitzer has put up a load of chicken wings from the famous Anchor Bar in Buffalo. We are going to settle this infamous rivalry between the Ottawa Senators and the Buffalo Sabres in six games, and at that time, I beg you to join me as we enjoy some delicious chicken wings.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There are times when one has to take a stance in opposition to his boss, the Premier of this province. For those of us who have people from our own community of Niagara playing for the Buffalo Sabres, I must say that if the Premier thinks that the Ottawa Senators are going to defeat the Buffalo Sabres, he's dreaming in Technicolor.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just like to inform

the House that the heart and soul of the Ottawa Senators, Chris Neil, comes right from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Is the sportscast finished? It's now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, and it concerns the political slush fund operated by his government. For weeks now, we've stood in this House and asked question after question—more than 260 in all, between both of the opposition parties—about this slush fund that the McGuinty government has been running. The answers have been non-existent. The clearest statement we've received from the Premier and his government is that we on this side of the House are somehow racist for asking questions that his own minister acknowledges are legitimate.

Given the number of legitimate questions, acknowledged by the minister, would the Premier not agree that it's time for the Auditor General to be called in by the government, by the minister or by the assembly to get the answers that Ontarians deserve about why millions and millions of their dollars were sent out the door without an application process, without proper oversight, without any kind of a review? Can the Premier give me a single reason why he would not call the Auditor General in to review this now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): There's no doubt about it that there is a marked difference in terms of the approach that we bring when it comes to dealing with immigration issues. We believe that for too long, our newcomer communities were ignored. We believe they have an absolutely essential contribution to make to the quality of life and the strength of the economy that we enjoy here in Ontario. That's why, for the very first time, with year-end money, we will put in place new capital grants for our partners who are delivering immigration services.

I have said that we can and must do a better job when it comes to developing an application process. We have that process in place now. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in immigration services to ensure that newly arrived Canadians have access to all the opportunities they need to flourish, to achieve their potential and to contribute to the strength of both this economy and our society.

1430

Mr. Tory: The Premier insists on making this about immigration, when in fact what it is about is accountability. With one or two exceptions, which we will cover today, no one has talked about what these groups do. What we have talked about is how they got the money,

how they knew money was available, what scrutiny was exercised by the government before they got the money and, in some cases, whom did they know in the government when they got the money. These are the kinds of questions. Where the Premier is saying that the ends justify the means, we're saying that we want to take a look at the means and satisfy ourselves that one of our duties here, to safeguard the taxpayers' money, was upheld.

This kind of abuse that the government is engaged in sees money rushed out the door with no accountability, no transparency, no fairness and, in some instances, with the purpose, it appears, of improving the Premier's political fortunes and those of his party.

Having stated that legitimate concern, if the Premier believes that everything has been done right here and it's all about immigration and helping immigrants, why won't you have the auditor come in and confirm that it has all been done right? Why won't you?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it would be helpful if we were to take a look at something that was written by way of an editorial in the *Share* newspaper. They bill themselves as Canada's largest ethnic newspaper. I quote from the May 3 edition. It reads:

"We understand the politics at play here. We understand that the Conservatives and the NDP will grasp at opportunity to try and embarrass the governing Liberals, especially with an election a few months away. What we don't find amusing is their using needed assistance to minority communities to further their political ends."

It goes on to say, "This government has worked very hard over the past few years to make a difference in the lives of minorities in this province and has shown real and consistent commitment, not the kind we usually see where politicians only show up a couple of months before an election."

We will continue to work as hard as we can to ensure that every new arrival in our province has every opportunity they need to succeed.

Mr. Tory: There is not a member—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.
Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: There is not one member on any side in this House who would challenge the duty of the government to do just that. For you to even imply otherwise—as I have said before and I'll say it to your face in here—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition place his question. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade needs to maintain order.

Mr. Tory: For you to imply otherwise, that there is any member of this House on any side that doesn't completely uphold and support the need to support these immigrants—as I've have said elsewhere and I'll say it here to your face—is beneath the office that you hold.

What we are talking about here is another of the tests of leadership that one has to pass in this business, and that is the duty that we all have here as members of this

Legislature—one of the most fundamental duties—namely, to safeguard the way in which the taxpayers' money is allocated to anybody at any time for any program.

The Premier said this morning, "I regret that we didn't have that kind of process in place," referring to an application process and so on. You think you can redeem yourself simply by saying that. We're asking simply that the Auditor General, an impartial officer of this Legislature, be asked to look at what happened here and reassure the taxpayers that what you say is true.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the Conservative Party should ask himself why he and his members have voted against virtually every single initiative that we have put in place to better the lives of new Canadians here in the province of Ontario. He might want to ask himself that.

He might want to ask himself why it was that when they were in government they cut adult education programs by 80%. They might want to ask themselves why they not only did not achieve success; they didn't even bother to try to land our very first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which ensures for the first time that immigrants arriving in the province of Ontario are entitled to the same financial supports as an immigrant arriving in the province of Quebec. They might want to ask themselves why they never made those efforts while they were in government. And they might, one more time, want to ask themselves why it is that they put immigration in the crime section of their platform. If the leader of the official opposition denounces that, renounces that and is turning his back on that, he should stand up right now and say that.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Tory: The Premier can continue to play these cards if he thinks that's what's suitable, but I think what people are really asking themselves in this instance is not calling into question the commitment or not calling into question the bona fides of members of this Legislature with respect to their support for immigrants, but rather they are calling into question whether or not people are prepared to be accountable for the way in which taxpayers' money is spent by this government, regardless of who it goes to.

These people, the taxpayers we all represent, work hard to earn their money and they expect a minimum standard of accountability from their government, and you, sir, have fallen well short in that regard.

The Premier wants to read editorials. Let me read you an extract from the *Toronto Star* today. They say: "Accountability and transparency should not be treated as an afterthought. McGuinty should bring in the Auditor General without delay."

The Premier admitted this morning that he didn't get this right, nor did his government. For that reason, I would suggest he heed the words of the *Toronto Star* and call in the auditor.

I'm simply asking the Premier this question: Why won't you call in the auditor? What is it you are hiding? What are you afraid of?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To highlight the marked difference in terms of the approach that we bring to these issues, the newest nominated Conservative candidate said that funding capital projects for new Canadians is “pandering to ethnic communities.”

I would ask the leader of the official opposition whether he endorses that view, just recently articulated by the newest member of his party.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It's going to be a long afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Some of these grants—and we'll have a chance to talk about them here in question period—were worse than any suggestion of that kind, because what they are is an absolutely irresponsible allocation of taxpayers' money to any group whatsoever without any kind of check or balance, without any kind of accountability.

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: We'll get to that.

The fact is that the Premier admits that and then refuses to do anything about it, to have it looked into.

Let me quote what the Kitchener-Waterloo Record writes today: “When will the Ontario government stop treating the public with contempt.... Even if every cent went to a legitimate cause, this is a shoddy, unacceptable way to spend public money.... Premier McGuinty's government stands at a crossroads. It can retreat into a tunnel of silence and concealment. Or it can walk a straight path into the broad daylight where accountability and transparency rule. For an honourable government, for a government that knows its public duty, the choice is obvious.”

Take some responsibility. Stand up and explain why you will not bring the auditor in. Stop playing cards. Just try answering the question and taking some responsibility for yourself.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition makes reference to me playing cards. The only cards I'm playing are those that he or other members of his party have dealt me. I would ask him again whether or not he agrees with the opinion offered by the newest member of his party, who says that funding capital projects for new Canadians is “pandering to ethnic communities.”

1440

I want you to know that I disagree very strongly with that kind of statement. I have an entirely different outlook when it comes to supporting our immigrants. I believe that we have a shared responsibility—each and every one of us, 13 million strong here in the province of Ontario—to welcome, to greet openly and warmly our new arrivals and to make sure they have in place the supports they need to find opportunity to achieve their greatest potential, whatever that might be.

That is a decidedly different approach from that brought by the party opposite. If I'm wrong, I would ask the leader of the official opposition again to denounce and renounce that statement made by the newest member of his party.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I'll offer a bargain to the Premier: I will stand in my place and suggest to you that I do not accept the characterization Mr. Hillier made of the vast majority of those grants, and I'll ask you—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister of Energy. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: I'll ask you in return, when you see the taxpayers' money being used to fund a grant of \$250,000 to the Bengali Cultural Society, thanks to a meeting with Maria Minna; a grant of \$200,000 to the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, thanks to its extensive, incredible ties to the Liberal Party campaign chair, the Deputy Premier and other assorted Liberal supporters; a grant of \$275,000 to another organization that has ties to the office of another of your ministers—won't you admit that it is time we had the Auditor General in to clear the air on this so that some of the groups you're talking about today, and so am I, do not have their reputations besmirched by the kinds of things that have happened in respect of some of these groups that clearly used back channels, secret channels, unknown channels, to get public money? Won't you agree that we need the auditor to look at this?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If anybody is besmirching the names of individuals associated with these organizations, or the organizations themselves, it would be the party opposite. The leader of the official opposition smeared the names of two individuals and the organization itself—the International Seniors Club of Brampton. He did that, not us. He smeared the reputation of Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services. He said that we can't trust the financial acumen of the Ontario Khalsa Darbar.

We bring a different approach to these issues. We think we have a shared, indeed profound, responsibility to reach out to new Canadians, to give them the necessary supports and to put in place the kinds of provisions that ensure they can find all the opportunity they need to succeed, whether those are English-as-a-second-language services, other kinds of opportunities that help them become quickly integrated into the economy, into our society, in our public schools, through the health care system. All those kinds of things are absolutely essential if you and I are going to make a tremendous success of this wonderful adventure on which we've embarked here in Ontario: our wonderful diversity. We remain very much committed to that success.

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. In connection with the McGuinty government slush fund, at any time since April 15, 2007, has the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration indicated to the Premier his willingness to resign?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: No, he has not, but let me just tell you what that same Share editorial said about

Minister Colle: “Minister Colle has proven that he understands that there are good, decent people who are working hard in the trenches day after day to help their fellow citizens, especially newcomers who may some day be able to do the same for others once they’ve established themselves.

“Many of these dedicated community workers make their contributions quietly and without fanfare, sometimes at great personal cost and sacrifice, and all they need is a little hand up.

“Minister Colle, more than any other minister from all the parties until now, gets it. He has proven that he understands the value of these front-line, grassroots organizations and the committed workers, and we laud and support him for it.”

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, then my question is this: At any time since April 15, 2007, has the Premier asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to resign in connection with the McGuinty government’s year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: No, I have not, and let me tell you why. I know the opposition have devoted themselves in recent weeks to bringing a great deal of pressure to bear on Minister Colle. It would have been nice to have some of that pressure brought to bear in terms of bringing more supports to our immigration services, but that was not to be.

Let me just tell you that I’ve had the opportunity to watch Minister Colle at close hand. He’s responsible for a brand new ministry, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and he’s charged with reaching out to new Canadians—not an easy thing to do, especially when you’re breaking new ground. We have admitted that we could and should—and we have, in fact—improve the process when it comes to putting out capital dollars. But nobody is more committed, nobody is more dedicated, more—

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I want to quote from today’s Sudbury Star editorial, where they say your government has been playing “fast and loose with public funds” and the fact is that neither you nor the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has felt it’s important that someone be held accountable for this. In the words of the Sudbury Star, they ask the question, in relation to the McGuinty government’s slush fund: Is this refusal to hold someone accountable “arrogance,” “incompetence,” “misplaced goodwill” or “simple misunderstandings”? Which is it, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As I’ve had the opportunity to indicate before, we set out to do something which no other government had undertaken before. We wanted to put in place capital grants for immigration services with year-end money—not an easy thing to do, given the short amount of time you have, but we have learned from that process. Where others feared to go, we have learned that

it’s more important that we have in place now a more formal application process to ensure that everybody is treated equally and fairly. We have learned from that.

I think Ontarians want to know two things from their government: first, that we remain committed to ensuring that all our new arrivals are getting the opportunities they need to succeed, that we provide the necessary funds through their immigration support services; and second, that their government from time to time admits it made a mistake, which I have done, and takes the necessary steps to improve the process, which we have also done here, and it’s in place right now.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Premier, we’ve heard you boast a lot about accountability now and in the past, but the issue here is that \$32 million of the public’s money went out the door with no announcement of a program, no formal application process, no criteria by which proposals might be evaluated or judged, no follow-up evaluation process, no follow-up auditing process, and at least some of the money, significant amounts of money, went to people well connected with the Liberal Party.

Now, you say you’re all about accountability. The Minister of Citizenship says we’re asking legitimate questions. I ask the Premier this: If this is about accountability and you want to boast about accountability, why has the Premier refused to allow the Auditor General to investigate and report on this until after the election? Why are you so afraid of the Auditor General looking at this and reporting it on it before the election, Premier?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I believe that by any objective measure, we have moved the yardstick further than any other government when it comes to accountability. Our changes to the sunshine law have been expanded to ensure that that particular piece of legislation includes OPG and Hydro One. We have provided additional authority to the Auditor General, who can now audit hospitals, school boards, children’s aid societies, the broader public sector and the like. When it comes to the freedom-of-information legislation, that has been expanded to include Hydro One, OPG and universities. I think we have done a tremendous amount when it comes to moving forward on the accountability file, and we look forward to doing more.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, we have all heard you boast about this, but this is \$32 million of government money, over two years, that went out the door—no announcement. Literally hundreds of community organizations and multicultural organizations across this province that would have liked to apply were never told; some, like the Hindu temple in Hamilton, were told, “No, there’s no program. There’s no money available, and even though you’ve made a request, there’s nothing here for you.” That’s really what people want to know. For you to boast about accountability but then in the next breath to refuse to allow the Auditor General to examine how \$32 million went out the door with no accountability process, for you to refuse to allow that until after the election, suggests to

people that you have something to hide. Why is the Premier so afraid of the Auditor General's examining and reporting on this? What do you have to hide, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know we can pursue this indefinitely, and I'm more than prepared to do so. But I think what Ontarians are looking for here is some sense of our motivation in this matter, and what we're motivated by is a genuine desire to improve opportunities for new Canadians arriving in the province of Ontario to ensure that they can, as soon as possible, become integrated into the economy and into our society.

They also want to know when we've made a mistake, and I have said that as we broke new ground as a government, something no government has ever done before, which is to issue capital dollars with year-end money, we did so without having in place first a formal application process. We have now drawn a lesson from that. We have in place a formal application process, and we will continue to do what we feel we need to do to ensure that new arrivals, our immigrants, have those opportunities they need to succeed.

Mr. Hampton: You speak about motivation. The former federal Liberal government, under Jean Chrétien, used to say that the motivation was national unity, and therefore nobody should ask about tens of millions of dollars that went out the door with no accountability process—until it was discovered that most money went to Liberal Party organizers and Liberal Party backroom people.

My question here, Premier, and the Toronto Star asked this question: "Accountability and transparency should not be treated as an afterthought"—after you get caught. "McGuinty should bring in the Auditor General without delay." Premier, if you're really concerned about accountability and transparency, why is the Premier so opposed to the Auditor General examining and reporting on the \$32-million slush fund until after the election? What are you afraid of between now and the election, Premier? That the Auditor General might issue a report saying there was—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it would be helpful for the leader of the NDP to hear again what that editorial said from Share newspaper. It said, "We understand the politics at play here. We understand that the Conservatives and the NDP will grasp at any opportunity to try and embarrass the governing Liberals, especially with an election a few months away. What we don't find amusing is they're using needed assistance to minority communities to further their political ends.

I understand that their objective is to throw mud. If there are innocents hurt along the way, that's not something they have particular regard for."

We have acknowledged that there's a problem. The problem has to do with the process. We've addressed that in a very specific way. That has now been fixed. But we will continue to give expression to our resolve to help new Canadians find the opportunities they need right here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier, and the real objective here is to try to bring about a shred of accountability with respect to how the taxpayers' money is dealt with.

The Premier talked about motivation. Let's talk about motivation with respect to the \$200,000 that was given to the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre. Here's how it breaks down.

The group registers as an animal welfare charity, with its head office being the office of a Liberal riding association president. Three weeks later, it gets \$200,000 sent to the home of a friend of the Liberal campaign chair, who is also the Minister of Finance. All seven directors of the organization have made donations to the Liberal Party. One of them is a riding association president, another one is a Liberal candidate, and a third is a former staff member in the office of the Minister of Health.

This is no different from the people who were involved in the Gomery mess trying to justify it on the basis that it was about national unity.

Why won't you, in light of these kinds of facts and optics, agree to bring in the auditor to clear the air? If there's nothing wrong with any of this, if this is as it should be, what is the Premier afraid of, in terms of bringing the auditor in to have a look at what looks like a very stinky mess indeed?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to read from a letter sent by SPRINT, Senior People's Resources in North Toronto, which received some year-end money. The letter was sent to Minister Colle by Jane Moore, the executive director. She says, in part:

"SPRINT is having some painting done. The painter came to me and warmly introduced himself and said: 'I am extremely pleased to be here at SPRINT on a painting job because 16 years ago I was a newcomer to Canada, spoke English poorly and was not able to land a job.

"It was suggested to me that I do some volunteer work and so I came to SPRINT. I served as a weekly 'friendly visitor' to a 99-year-old man for over a year. The man's daughter asked me if I'd paint her house. I did and now I have a small painting business with several men working for me—thank you SPRINT!"

That's the kind of organization we are seeking to support, so that they, in turn, can offer supports to new Canadians so that they can enjoy success, raise their families with a sense of dignity and contribute to the quality of life that we all enjoy here in Ontario.

Mr. Tory: Let me try to continue to ask about the Iranian Canadian society. We listed a bunch of other considerations.

We find that in September and October of 2005, Reza Moridi, director of the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre and a Liberal candidate in Richmond Hill, received a patronage appointment from this government to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons; David Farmani, president of the Richmond Hill Liberal riding asso-

ciation, received an appointment to the College of Physicians and Surgeons; Mandana Motamedi received an appointment, also as director, to the council of the College of Optometrists of Ontario; and Meysa Maleki received a patronage appointment to the council of the College of Nurses of Ontario.

So what we have here, in this one organization that got a cheque for \$200,000, are seven directors, seven donors to the Liberal Party, four patronage appointments, one minister's staffer, one candidate, one riding association president who received a cheque at home for \$200,000.

The time is clearly now for this Premier to stand up and say, "It's time to have some accountability. It's time to bring in the auditor to have a look at this." If there's nothing wrong, why would the Premier possibly object to having the auditor clear the air once and for all?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm proud to report that the Iranian community is 140,000 strong now in Ontario. They continue to grow. They are strongly present especially in the GTA, 905 and York regions. We are interested in building new supports for that community and so many other communities. The leader of the official opposition doesn't support this.

We continue to insist that we must find ways to support new Canadians, to give them those opportunities that they need.

I've acknowledged that there was a problem with the process. We have now rectified that problem. It is now more formalized. It is in place.

We all should share at least a sense of responsibility to reach out to these communities, whether it's the Iranian community, the Indo-Canadian community, the Chinese Canadian community or whatever. They're here, they're part of our broader community, and we will continue to support them.

1500

YEAR-END GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, this morning you refused to answer questions of the press when they asked which ministries, besides citizenship, you give money to which was subsequently doled out. The minister also refused to disclose the total amount of monies doled out in slush-fund style for the past two years. Will the minister please inform this House, today, how much money was made available for the fiscal years ending 2005-06 and 2006-07, and to which ministries was it distributed, who subsequently doled it out?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It would be useless to suggest to my friend that he misconstrued what I said this morning. I don't want to be unkind to him. I simply want to encourage him to look at the budget that was presented on March 22. If he were to actually read the budget, here's what he'd find: For 2006-07, the government was originally projecting a deficit of \$2.4 billion. During the course of that year, the in-year

expenses—let's go to the in-year revenue changes first. The in-year revenue changes amounted to \$3.4 billion. That's because the Ontario economy was producing more strongly than we predicted. If he would just turn the page, then, to page 125, he would see a full summary of in-year expenses, and they totalled, in the net, \$1.7 billion.

Mr. Prue: I don't know what kind of an answer that was, because in not one place in that budget does it list "slush fund" and the money you give out at the end of the year, which is not in your budget. So that is simply not adequate. The finance minister doesn't know or won't say how much slush fund money went out at the year end. That's the question that is being asked—not what was in your budget, but the slush fund at the end of the year.

My question is a simple one: How is this open and transparent if the Minister of Finance refuses to disclose who got what out of the slush fund? When is he going to make it public—all of the ministries that handed out slush funds at the end of the past two fiscal years?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend just doesn't get it. I understand their desire—it's gardening season, so get some mud and fling it wherever they can. I suggest to him, simply, he do two things: first, read the budget or the summary; and, second, if he has the capacity, I would invite him to visit the website of every ministry in government, where every single in-year expenditure is itemized, hundreds of them—hospices in Hamilton, community centres in Niagara Falls, a new convention centre in the city of Niagara Falls. Every single one of those expenditures is available for my friend to see and 13 million Ontarians to see. That's openness and transparency.

RURAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, education in rural Ontario is a particular challenge for many reasons relating to geographic location. We inherited a very flawed funding formula from the previous government, which took the funding and divided it in a one-size-fits-all approach. We on this side of the House understand that there are unique areas in rural Ontario that are unable to thrive on this approach. Can you please advise my constituents how we are ensuring rural schools have the resources they need to ensure students' success?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I want to thank the member for Northumberland for his advocacy but also for the work he does with the individual schools in his riding and the support that he gives them for publicly funded education. One of the hallmarks of education in Ontario has been that whether you go to Cobourg or whether you go to Kenora or whether you go to downtown Toronto, you see schools that have excellent teachers, excellent resources and kids getting an opportunity that is similar across the province. That is a hallmark that we have worked to maintain, so

we've been changing the funding formula since we came into office. Last year we put in place a school foundation grant that guarantees small schools a principal and a secretary; this year we put in place a supported schools grant that guarantees that small schools and isolated schools have enough teachers to deliver the program that they need. We will continue to do that, and this year funding for rural boards will increase by \$114 million, or 3.6%, despite declining enrolment.

Mr. Rinaldi: As you are aware, we are now squarely facing the issue of declining enrolment in the province. Between 2002 and 2007, 52 school boards declined in enrolment, which fell by 2.5%. Between 2007 and 2011, 56 school boards are projecting a decline in enrolment of another 2.5%. With these statistics, many of my constituents are worried about possible school closures. The previous government closed 503 public schools, while 266 private schools opened, even though they did not face declining enrolment as we do today. What are we doing to ensure good schools in rural Ontario remain open?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: We've listened very closely to the concerns of rural communities. We placed a moratorium on school closures until we could develop a process. We put in place pupil accommodation review guidelines that require boards to look at the value of schools, not just in terms of program—although program is paramount—but also in terms of the economic value to community and the services that can be delivered out of a school. That idea of a school as a hub is embedded in our pupil accommodation review guidelines. Those guidelines also require that boards consult with and make transparent the process around any kind of consolidation or school closure. In fact, we've provided \$2.5 million for a new school in the member's own riding of Cobourg, St. Mary's Secondary School.

Again, in the face of declining enrolment, we have continued to invest in new schools. One of the frontiers of publicly funded education in this province is the demographic shift. I visit schools where the kids in kindergarten are half the number of the kids in grade 6. We're all going to have to work on that as we go forward.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. The Premier characterizes the opposition's call for accountability and transparency as political opportunism. I'd like to read the following to the Premier: "We respectfully demand that full investigations of this transaction be undertaken so as to safeguard the interests of members of the Iranian-Canadian community in Ontario."

That is not the call of the official opposition or the third party; it is the call of 13 signatories to a letter addressed to the Premier, which I trust he's seen by now, calling for an investigation because they don't like what

has happened in the Richmond Hill. When they have asked Mr. Reza, the now candidate, to explain where this money is, he has refused to meet with them.

Will the Premier explain to us why he isn't prepared to give the investigation that they have asked for to the people of Richmond Hill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I know that the member opposite has been engaging in all kinds of speculation—sometimes very reckless speculation. What I've said again to him is that there was a lack of services in the Iranian community, and that community is growing in numbers, especially in that part of the province. They needed support services, they needed a focal point, and we invested in partners to try and develop that, because it hasn't been there since 2000. That's the investment we made in trying to meet that need.

1510

Mr. Klees: Interesting. Here's what this group, the Iranian-Canadian community in Richmond Hill, had to say about the organization that got the \$200,000: "To the best of our knowledge the designated group that received the funding had no prior experience of promoting the welfare or safeguarding the interests of Iranian-Canadians in Ontario."

I say to the minister: How can it be justified that \$200,000 is now sitting in a bank account and the minister allowed My Canada, who were providing services, to shut their doors? What was the difference? My Canada had to shut its doors; \$200,000 was given to an organization with no experience. How can the minister justify that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This minister has tried this before, putting one group against another. When I told him specifically—

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Former minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: When he was the former minister in that government, he never even mentioned the words "newcomers" or "immigration." What we have done successfully is ensured that now \$920 million is available in Ontario for all groups, for all services, like ISAP, the host program, the settlement workers in schools program. Those millions of dollars are now available in York region, in Toronto, in Sudbury, for groups all across the board that we fought for. That's where the resources are and that's what we achieved.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, two or three times today, you have quoted from the editorial in Share newspaper. What you haven't done, though, is quoted the title of the editorial, which is "Using the Race Card," and what you have not quoted are a couple of sentences in here specifically about you that say, "Maybe the Premier

was implying that their behaviour was racist. And if he was, he was probably right." Will the Premier explain if you endorse this part of the editorial as well?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said before, the investments that we've made in many diverse groups across the province—and some of those diverse groups have a heritage that goes back to 1850, right up to the new groups coming from countries—we made those investment to try and ensure that they integrated into Ontario in a continuum. That's what we did. The principle of helping newcomers is what we base the principle on.

The opposition has raised questions, legitimate questions, and I've said from the beginning, I accept their criticism and I accept their questions as being legitimate. That's what we've been focusing on: how to best achieve those results to ensure that everybody feels part of this great province.

Mr. Prue: My question is back to Premier, because it is the Premier who quotes this particular editorial called "Using the Race Card," from Share newspaper. I quote again, and I'd like the Premier to answer this, when the editorialist writes, "Maybe the Premier was implying that their behaviour was racist. And if he was, he was probably right." There have been a lot of things said in this House over the last couple of weeks, including by the Premier, who was forced to nearly apologize for making that statement. I ask him today, since he's so proud to quote this editorial in the Legislature, are you also endorsing what it says about the opposition? That is my question.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The opposition has been quoting from all kinds of editorials—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.
Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, the opposition has been quoting from all kinds of articles and editorials. What the Premier has said emphatically is that this is about trying to improve the plight of many Ontarians who have been left out, helping Ontarians who have been ignored, who come to this country with two Ph.D.s and get doors slammed in their faces. That's what we've raised.

The leader of the third party has emphatically said, about the investment we've made in many of these newcomer settlement agencies, that these agencies were fly-by-night. That's what we object to.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Recently, we announced some good news for some of our small rural libraries. I have a strong belief in the need for small local libraries to serve smaller rural communities that otherwise would only be served by larger urban centres.

In my riding, we have libraries in Bonfield, where we recently celebrated some good news with some infrastructure funding; in Callander, where I participated with

the Friends of the Library in various fundraisers; in Mattawa, where we've moved the community library into the local high school, and what a great contribution that's making to the entire community. Most recently, I was in the Powassan library during the Maple Syrup Festival, which was a great event this year. They're doing some great work there and becoming a real hub of the community they serve.

All of these libraries are served by their Friends of the Library organizations, and they're doing some great work in our smaller communities. I'd like to ask the minister to please advise us how we are supporting these small rural libraries across the province.

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I want to thank the member from Nipissing for her question. I'm certainly pleased that Ontario's public libraries are receiving a one-time investment of \$5 million. This investment will help to strengthen 260 rural, remote and First Nations libraries that serve communities of less than 20,000 people.

The six libraries in the riding of Nipissing, as the member has mentioned, will receive \$54,000 in new funding. What this means is that most of the \$5 million is going to exactly the kind of smaller rural libraries the member is speaking about. We're proud to make these types of investments, because this government clearly understands the value of supporting our libraries and our rural communities.

Ms. Smith: Thank you, Minister, for highlighting these important investments in my riding. My constituents and, I know, those of my colleagues in other ridings will be very pleased to know that this government has seen and is meeting their needs.

But even though these types of direct investments are important, I know we're doing much more for our libraries in our smaller communities. Again I'd like to ask the minister: What sort of long-term support are we providing to rural libraries, not only in my riding but across the province?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: While we did meet valid needs in our recent \$5-million investment to smaller rural libraries, our support to the sector goes well beyond this. For example, our recent investments in the Knowledge Ontario program will allow libraries across the province to purchase digital library resources, including computers and educational materials. In many cases, smaller communities now have the same level of access electronically to materials that their larger urban counterparts enjoy.

Also benefiting rural communities, my ministry provides ongoing funding to over 50 First Nations libraries. As many of the libraries are community hubs, they also provide services from our Service Ontario program, giving rural communities access to many government services without having to travel to urban centres.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, and I hope the Premier will

decide that he should answer this question himself, because he has been quoting today in this House from an editorial in the *Share* newspaper and using this as his justification for not calling in the Auditor General.

Just a few days ago, the Premier was moved to issue a statement of regret after he implied that members on this side of the House, from both parties, were racist for asking questions about this slush fund, although, throughout, his members have continued to make these accusations in various ways.

My question for the Premier is this: What happened to the statement of regret? Will you stand in your place, right here and right now, and apologize for making these kinds of insinuations and accusations that are beneath the office you hold as Premier of this province?

1520

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): If there is something that I hope we can all agree on, it is that we have a shared responsibility. There are, I think, 140,000 new Canadians arriving in the province on an annual basis. That is a huge number. As I enjoy the privilege of doing a little bit of travel on behalf of Ontarians, when I tell people in other jurisdictions that 27% of the people living in our province were born outside the country and 52% of the people living in our provincial capital were born outside the country, they are amazed.

I like to think that all of us—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's a dimension, a characteristic of our province that is exceptional. I would argue, it gives us a huge competitive advantage. I would also argue that with that diversity comes a special responsibility to make sure that we continue to get this right. That requires that we find ways, on an ongoing basis, to provide supports to our new arrivals so that they enjoy opportunities, so that they can succeed and look their kids in the eye and say, "We've picked the right place to come to. I've got a good job. I'm earning a decent standard of living. We're finding opportunities for success here in Ontario, Canada." We remain committed to those kinds of ideals. We're informed by those values.

Mr. Tory: I would suggest that those words about the shared responsibility ring very hollow indeed when you will not stand up in this House and apologize for the fact that you have not only said things yourself that insinuated and directly suggested that people in both parties on this side of the House are racist in some way or other for asking questions about accountability; furthermore, you have—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Not only won't you come in here and explain yourself and apologize for having made that insinuation, if you really believe that we have that shared responsibility and that we share in the belief that that is our responsibility here, but then you also won't, in

response to a question from the member for Beaches–East York, explain this. You quoted over and over again an editorial that you obviously feel very strongly is completely correct. It says the following: "Maybe the Premier was implying that their behaviour was racist. And, if he was, he was probably right. Why else would they focus on these small grants to people of colour?"

You were given several opportunities by the member for Beaches–East York to get up and disassociate yourself with that suggestion of an editorial you quoted three or four times in here today. Will you get up and do it now and apologize for what you yourself said earlier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There is a difference between the government and the Conservative Party, and the differences lies in the extent of our commitment, the extent of our devotion, the extent of our resolve, the extent of our determination to provide opportunities to new Canadians.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We believe that it's important for us, in order to be competitive, to be at our best, and that means 13 million strong. That means ensuring that those 140,000 who arrive on an annual basis can become integrated into our society at the earliest possible opportunity, enjoy a good quality of life, earn a decent standard of living, that they can continue to practise their faith, enjoy their culture, celebrate their traditions, and make an ongoing powerful and positive contribution to the quality of life that we all enjoy. That's an informing ideal of ours. It's a value set that we share on this side of the House and it's something that we will continue to embrace.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Premier. I am going to read from a letter dated January 22, 2007—one of many that was directed to his office.

"Funding for the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) comes to an end in September 2007. After September 2007, the fastest-growing community in the GTA—the South Asian community—will be denied access to legal services that are affordable...."

"The South Asian community ... is the largest visible minority group in Ontario" and the "fastest-growing group" in the GTA.

So I ask: If the McGuinty government really is standing by its criteria for multicultural groups—this is the fastest-growing and the largest visible minority group in Ontario—why did they not meet his criteria? Why did he not fund them out of this year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'm glad to answer that question, because the two largest settlement groups that are coming into Ontario are coming from China and South Asia. That's why we've taken extra steps to increase our funding and

partner with organizations like AWIC, the Brampton Multicultural Community Centre, CultureLink, the India Rainbow Community Services of Peel. That's why we're supporting organizations across Ontario that service that large-growing area, especially in the region of Peel. We're doing that in a way never done before. Especially with the federal grants, all these agencies are hiring more people and expanding programs too.

Ms. DiNovo: You know, in the eight months that I've been here, I've seen the McGuinty Liberals smear my reputation in a by-election, I've seen them stonewall for the OLG—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: I fear I've touched a nerve. Not only did they smear my reputation during a campaign—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The second I sit down doesn't mean you can start to make noise. I will be naming the next member who makes any noise.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: Yes, Mr. Speaker. They are also very fond of shouting down a woman.

To the Premier again: This is a government that has smeared a reputation, my reputation, my family and my congregation—that was within eight months—and then we had the stonewalling through the OLG scandal. Now we have a slush fund. Again, all the opposition wants to know is about the criteria and about worthy groups like SALCO who did not meet that criteria.

So the question, finally, is: Why won't they open the books? Why won't they be transparent? Why won't they be accountable? Why won't they call in the auditor so the people of Ontario can see what's real and what's not?

The Speaker: There have been a number of questions asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: First of all, this is the same member who voted against a \$51-million increase to the legal aid budget. She voted against that. She has to explain that to the people in her riding, why she voted against the legal aid budget.

She also has to explain what her party did to Bob Hunter. Explain what they did to Bob Hunter.

Then she has to understand that we've made investments in the South Asian community that were long overdue, like the Ontario Khalsa Darbar. Many newcomers coming from South Asia are in the greater Toronto area without proper support. They're relying on the food bank at the Ontario Khalsa Darbar. They can't get ahead. We are trying to reach out to them. Never have they had anybody listen to them before. We are proud of the work we're doing with agencies of those major communities all across Ontario. Especially with the South Asian community, we're reaching out with excellent organizations like the Brampton Multicultural Community Centre, which is a—

The Speaker: Thank you.

1530

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. First, I wish to thank you for coming to Winchester in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh recently for a visit. That visit was an excellent opportunity for you to see first-hand 100 Club Park, where this government's funding is soon to be used in the redevelopment of recreational facilities there. This was one of six funding announcements for my riding under the rural infrastructure investment initiative. These projects are in addition to the more than \$4 million that the townships in my riding received through the Move Ontario program.

This government has demonstrated its commitment to infrastructure development in rural Ontario by investing in roads, bridges and other projects that were allowed to decline under the previous government.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you highlight some of the other initiatives this government has undertaken to support rural Ontario communities like those in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I am very pleased to respond to the question from the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh because he knows that this government understands and supports rural communities with a range of choices to meet their infrastructure priorities. That's why, with our federal and municipal partners, we have the COMRIF program, which will realize over \$900 million of road, water, waste water and recreation projects. That's why, through Infrastructure Ontario, we've arranged for more than \$2 billion of low-cost financing for municipalities for infrastructure needs.

That's why each municipality received part of Move Ontario, a \$400-million program through our government.

That's why, at a time when there was uncertainty about federal investment after the last COMRIF intake, we established R3 and doubled its amount to \$140 million to help realize 190 projects valued at more than \$268 million.

I want to commend this member, Mr. Brownell, and my parliamentary assistant, the member from Huron–Bruce, Ms. Mitchell, for their advocacy and hard work when it comes to rural Ontario and meeting the infrastructure needs across this province.

ORDER AND DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would remind members that we are in a place that requires civility, a bit of maturity. Question period was leaving those bounds today, and it won't happen tomorrow.

I would also remind members that questions need to be placed through the Speaker. That means they will be placed in the third person. Tomorrow I will not be allowing as much latitude as I did today.

PETITIONS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario already signed by thousands of people in my riding, including Gordon MacKenzie of my hometown of Barry's Bay.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore I, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I support this, affix my signature and send it to the table with Zachary.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I have thousands and thousands of names on this petition that I'm submitting.

"Right to Collective Bargaining for Part-time Workers at Ontario Colleges

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the right to join a union and to fully participate in free collective bargaining is recognized by the United Nations through its International Labour Organization as a fundamental human right; and

"Whereas part-time workers at Ontario's colleges are by law excluded from the right to collective bargaining by the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act; and

"Whereas comparable part-time workers at the province's universities and secondary schools have the right to free collective bargaining; and

"Whereas these part-time college workers do the same work as their full-time counterparts; and

"Whereas this work is often performed without comparable rights and remuneration; and

"Whereas these workers are subject to discriminatory treatment by their employer; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada to deny this basic right to part-time college workers; and

"Whereas there is no rationale for denying bargaining rights to these employees; and

"Whereas the abuse of part-time workers is having an impact on the quality of education college students receive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to extend full collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers."

I support this petition very, very strongly and I'll be signing it.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children's mental health services in order to balance its budget; and

"Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated, 'There will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN'; and

"Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge's emergency department, Durham police, Whitby Mental Health and social service providers; and

"Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health and addictions."

I affix my name in support.

NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES COLLÈGES COMMUNAUTAIRES

M. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): J'ai une pétition : « Le droit à la négociation collective pour les travailleuses et travailleurs à temps partiel des collèges de l'Ontario.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le droit d'adhésion à un syndicat et le fait de prendre part à la négociation collective de manière libre et entière est reconnu par les Nations Unies, par le truchement de l'Organisation internationale du travail, une de ces institutions spécialisées, comme un droit de la personne fondamentale; et

« Attendu que les travailleuses et les travailleurs à temps partiel des collèges de l'Ontario n'ont pas droit à la négociation collective en vertu de la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges; et

« Attendu que les travailleuses et travailleurs occupant des postes équivalents dans les écoles secondaires et les universités de la province ont droit à une libre négociation collective; et

« Attendu que ces travailleuses et travailleurs à temps partiel des collèges effectuent le même type de travail que leurs homologues à temps plein; et

« Attendu que ce travail est souvent accompli sans qu'ils bénéficient de droit et d'une rémunération équivalente à ceux de leurs homologues; et

« Attendu que ces travailleuses et travailleurs peuvent faire l'objet d'un traitement discriminatoire de la part de leur employeur; et

« Attendu que l'Ontario est la seule province au Canada à nier ce droit élémentaire aux travailleuses et travailleurs à temps partiel des collèges; et

« Attendu qu'il n'existe aucun motif pour nier des droits de négociation à ces employées et employés; et

« Attendu que l'augmentation du nombre de travailleuses et travailleurs à temps partiel a une répercussion sur la qualité de l'éducation que les étudiantes et étudiants reçoivent;

« Nous, soussignés, présentons cette pétition à la province de l'Ontario afin que les travailleuses et travailleurs à temps partiel des collèges bénéficient de droits complets à la négociation collective. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais la signer.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I'm pleased to have a petition that has been pre-certified by the Clerk's office. I'm hoping all of the rest that went in today were, or they'd be returned, I'm sure. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act is extremely lengthy and complex and requires full and extensive parliamentary and public debate and committee hearings throughout the province; and

"Whereas the rigid, pervasive and detailed framework proposed is excessive and will stifle innovation and flexibility in the long-term-care sector; and

"Whereas the additional burden, red tape and punitive measures imposed by the proposed legislation will aggravate ... the chronic underfunding of the sector, to the detriment of residents of the homes; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation will have serious implications for the viability of the for-profit and not-for-profit, charitable and municipal long-term-care sectors;

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

"We demand that the McGuinty government withdraw the proposed act, or remove the offending sections, and fulfill its commitment by a substantial increase in funding on a multi-year basis in the order of the promised \$6,000 per resident, per year."

I have affixed my signature.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I am pleased to sign this petition in support and present it to Lauren.

GAS WELLS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Another petition entitled "Preserve Our Gas Wells." It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas southern Ontario has had a localized gas well industry since the 1840s; and

"Whereas gas wells provide an efficient form of heat and energy for rural landowners and farmers; and

"Whereas inconsistent bureaucratic interpretation of regulations and often antagonistic enforcement measures threaten the financial viability of this natural resource;

"We, the undersigned, request as follows:

"That the McGuinty government investigate the Ministry of Natural Resources petroleum division, and direct civil servants to work proactively and positively with landowners and farmers to review the government's approach based on the following principles:

"(a) respect for property owners, and

"(b) consistent and fair treatment of gas well owners."

Underneath is the signature of James Houlden, and I sign as well in support.

CONDOMINIUMS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have about 100 names from two condominiums.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Condominium Act, 1998, is ineffective in protecting the rights of condominium residents; and

"Whereas the current Condominium Act, 1998, no longer addresses the changing nature of condominium builders, development and communities in Ontario since 1998; and

“Whereas issues such as a condominium review board, standard provisions for declarations and good-faith disclosure do not constitute any part of the act; and

“Whereas the amendments proposed in Bill 185, the Condominium Amendment Act, best deal with the shortcomings of the act through the creation of a condominium review board, give a voice to condominium residents, enforce the Condominium Act, advocate on behalf of condo dwellers, provide necessary information, assist condo owners to review documentation and resolve disputes faster, more affordably and without going to court; and

“Whereas Bill 185, the Condominium Amendment Act, will introduce standard provisions for declarations in order to ensure transparency before prospective buyers purchase a home, enabling them to read for themselves what they’re signing; and

“Whereas Bill 185, the Condominium Amendment Act, will incorporate good-faith disclosure (similar to the franchise disclosure act), forcing developers to pay damages when they fail to disclose information;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support and pass Bill 185, the Condominium Amendment Act.”

I am a strong believer in, and supporter of, this particular bill, given that I’m the author, and I’m going to sign it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My petition is submitted from many residents from Thornhill and a number of Toronto families. I read it because the member from Thornhill will not do so.

“Petition to Ontario Legislature to End Discrimination

“Whereas the Ontario government already fully funds 93% of faith-based schools in Ontario, but the remaining 7% receive no funding, solely because they are not Catholic;

“Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled in 1999 and again in 2005 that this arrangement is discriminatory and violates basic international human rights law that Ontario formally agreed to uphold;

“Whereas all three parties represented in the Legislature support Catholic separate school funding, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada, so that the only fair and viable solution to the discrimination is to extend funding to the small religious minorities that are currently excluded;

“Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Ontario has the constitutional power to provide funding to non-Catholic faith-based schools;

“Whereas Ontario is the only Western democracy that fully funds faith-based schools of one religion to the total exclusion of all other religions, while all other provinces except the Atlantic provinces fund faith-based schools and have thriving public school systems;

“Whereas the cultural survival of the affected minority groups is at stake;

“Whereas faith-based schools produce responsible and productive citizens; and

“Whereas the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Religious Schools in December 2004 submitted to the Minister of Education a detailed proposal for the funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools in a manner that is fair and accountable and protects and enhances the public interest;

“We call on the Ontario Legislature to pass legislation to provide equitable funding in respect of all faith-based schools in Ontario without religious discrimination and without any reduction in funding for public education, with accountability requirements and standards in place to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded.”

I am pleased to put my signature to this petition. I support it totally, and I hand it off to page Safa for a presentation to the table.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): “Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my name thereto and I will give it to page Doug.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L’AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Mr. Sorbara moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l’affectation anticipée de crédits et d’autres questions.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don’t think we have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

1550

The Deputy Clerk: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you think they came in because they knew I was going to be speaking on the budget? I don't think so. I know my friend Mr. Marchese—oh, I'm sorry; the member from Trinity–Spadina—is here for that reason.

I just want to mention at the outset of my remarks that I will be sharing the time allotted to me with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Pickering–Ajax. So if you see me going over about 15 minutes, sir, I wouldn't mind if you would just ask me to bring my remarks to a conclusion and cede the floor to my friend from Pickering–Ajax.

I have been talking about this budget and this budget bill for quite some time and I'm thrilled to be able to lead off third reading debate. I hope the debate proceeds expeditiously and we can pass this budget and this budget bill into law.

It is a budget that I am enormously proud of. It has been almost three years and eight months since we were first elected. When we were elected, we inherited some pretty desperate financial circumstances. Let me be simple about this: This province was in serious trouble. I think every member of this Parliament knows and most Ontarians know that we found ourselves confronted with a \$5.6-billion deficit. Over the course of three years and eight months now, we've been working as hard as we can to bring this province back to financial health, and with the budget I presented on March 22, we were able to do that.

In fact, in that budget, and the projections for the two out-years, the results will be that Ontario will, for the first time in decade and decades, have five years of consecutive surpluses. That's a tribute to the hard-working people of this province and the way in which they have industriously created a stronger economy.

When I presented the budget, I spoke about Ontario's new economic strength. I just want to say that Ontario's new economic strength is reflected in the fact that we're out of that period now of debilitating deficits and we're into a period of sustainable surpluses. It gives our government the capacity to do so much more, particularly in the area of enhancing the quality of public services.

I'm so proud of the additional investments we've been able to make in our education system. Our schools are better places to learn. You ask anyone who follows education and they'll talk to you about the crisis in education four years ago.

In the budget, we were able to make additional investments in health care. You ask anyone who follows

health care and they will tell you that health care was in crisis in Ontario four years ago. Now we've got a system that is so much more responsive. It's a system that is in the process of transformation, led by my colleague the Minister of Health. Just a few statistics: a record number of young men and women entering medical school; a record number of graduates; some 10,000 new nurses working in the health care system right across the province. And the figure that strikes me most profoundly is that more than 500,000 Ontarians who did not have a family doctor four years ago now have a family doctor.

This budget was designed to inspire expanded economic capacity right around the province, and we took some very specific steps in order to do that.

We're legislating the elimination of the capital tax. Every economist who understands the taxation system has described the capital tax, in colloquial terms, as a job-killing tax. We've been making progress on its elimination since the day we were sworn into office. The budget bill, which I hope we'll be passing in this House, will finally eliminate the capital tax as of July 1, 2010.

We were able for the first time to make reductions to and a transformation of the business education tax system. That's going to be of enormous importance to businesses right across Ontario, including communities like Thunder Bay, London and Ottawa which have had business education tax rates which were, unfairly, much higher than even neighbouring jurisdictions. When we fully implement these reforms, we'll be relieving our businesses of a tax burden of just over half a billion dollars.

Most importantly, for the first time in over a decade in this great province, this budget was able to address issues of poverty. I remember as if it were yesterday when Mike Harris, newly elected as Premier of this province, stood up in this House and all around Ontario, proudly proclaiming that he was going to slash—I think it was by 21%—what Ontario's most vulnerable population was receiving in the form of public assistance. This was a matter of pride for the Conservative Party: that they were going to get Ontario's most vulnerable people. I tell you, the Conservatives created an atmosphere in this province where most political leaders were afraid to talk about poverty. In our budget, for the first time in over a decade, as I said, we've started to address fundamentally the issue of poverty, and we start with poverty where it is most unacceptable, and that is in our children.

I want to repeat this, so that, I hope, I can finally convince Conservatives and New Democrats to vote for this budget: Over the course of five years, we are going to be spending some \$2.1 billion assisting Ontario's most vulnerable children with the Ontario child benefit. Have we done it all? Absolutely not. We're just beginning to feel this sense of new economic strength, and we have a lot more to do. But the course that we have taken over the past almost four years gives us that economic capacity.

It wasn't just with child poverty that this budget addressed Ontario's most vulnerable populations. We made specific provisions for some 155,000 injured

workers whose benefits had been falling short to receive more from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board: increases of 7.5% over the course of three years. That community had been crying out for years for a better deal and a fairer deal.

We were also able to address, with an additional allotment of some \$200 million, services to Ontario's developmentally handicapped populations. I invite members to visit a group home for developmentally disabled people anywhere in the province, our associations for community living. Go and see the work that is going on there and how challenging it is. Ask them how difficult things have become; ask them how important it is that this budget passes.

We were also able to improve the legal aid system. Legal aid is what helps Ontario's most vulnerable people when they're thrust into the court process. That system was fracturing, and we've turned that around with this budget.

1600

So I'm just so extremely proud of what we've been able to do for Ontario's most vulnerable populations and how, at the same time, we've been able to make investments that will strengthen business right around the province and how we have been able to take systems like property assessment and transform them so that they're fairer, more transparent and more responsible to homeowners right across Ontario.

To give one final word of encouragement for the opposition party to wake up and smell the coffee and vote in favour of this budget, I just want to remind them that the leader of the official opposition, when asked bluntly what he would change in the government's budget—I am told that his response was, "I can't think of a thing," and I take that as a concession by the Leader of the Opposition that it is this budget that really speaks to the true values of the people of Ontario.

It is of note that the budget was presented almost six weeks ago, on March 22—I hope I'm doing the counting right. Maybe it's almost seven weeks. This Parliament has been sitting every sessional day since then, and not once has a member of either opposition party stood in their place and asked a question about this budget. It's really interesting. I think the whole theme in this spring session of Parliament is designed for the opposition parties to avoid the fact that the government, in its budget, has truly captured the mood and values of the people of the province.

What have they been speaking about instead? They've been speaking about year-end investments.

My budget, as well, was about year-end investments. It was about providing \$8 million for hospices around the province.

Last night, I attended a marvellous function in honour of our member from Stoney Creek, Jennifer Mossop. The people from the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice in Hamilton were there.

Do you know what a hospice is? It's a community-based facility, a home, to provide for people in their last

days, so that if they can't be at home, they will not be dying in the sterile environment of a hospital. It's better care; it's more sensitive care.

What did the folks from the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice in Hamilton say to me last night? It touched me greatly. They said, "You have made an incredible difference in the lives of our frail and elderly right across Ontario."

Only \$8 million, in this case, in this budget, and we're starting once again to build a system of hospices that can provide for our moms and dads as they prepare to leave the planet.

I was in Niagara Falls earlier on—well, close to Niagara Falls. I want to tell you about year-end investments, and I want to tell you how proud I was that we were able to make a year-end investment in the city of Niagara Falls, which will mean the creation of a very important new convention centre there so that the full potential of tourism can be realized in Niagara Falls.

I was down in the area of Welland and, because I was in Welland, talking about the agricultural industry down there. I was incredibly proud of the fact that our year-end investment in our budget could make a \$12.5-million investment in the Vineland Research Station.

Why did we do that? Not because the application procedure was absolutely perfect, but because that community, and its agricultural community in particular, said, "We need this assistance to do the research necessary to make sure that our farmers and our grape growers and our tender fruit industry can continue to succeed and thrive." I'm glad to say that in this case we've got a partner as well. Maybe not the opposition parties, because they think this is all money poorly spent, but the federal government said, "Yes, we agree," and they are putting in \$12.5 million as well.

I'm looking at the clock, and I could go on and on. There are so many things, so many people that we have been able to touch in a positive way, so many communities that we have been able to help—not always with a large grant. Sometimes it's \$50,000 to put in a new elevator in a community facility in a very remote community where, if they don't get it from us, they don't get it at all, and it means the difference between keeping the place open and closing.

Interjection: Like Aldershot.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend says, "Aldershot." That's right: in Aldershot as well.

Right across Ontario, thousands and thousands of organizations have seen their aspirations reflected through the positive initiatives in this budget. Do we have more work to do? You bet your bottom dollar. The good news is, however, that this province is now on a sound course. The province's economy is strengthening. The province's finances are healthy again. If I have anything to do with it, we are going to continue down this course, not just in the months to come but in the years to come. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Durham. Excuse me, member from Durham' I have erred. The

time was to be split. The member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge has the floor.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm pleased to be able to rise today and follow whom I colloquially refer to as my boss, the Minister of Finance, in my capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. I can appreciate the member from Durham wanting to be on his feet, but as the finance minister indicated in his opening comments, he would be sharing the time allocated for us with me.

I have had the pleasure, during my time here, to serve in the capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Honourable Gerry Phillips, in what was then the Management Board Secretariat and is now government services, and then subsequently in finance, both with Minister Duncan—initially with Minister Sorbara just after he finished the 2005 budget, the budget that we refer to as the Reaching Higher plan, which focused upon post-secondary education, and subsequently with Minister Duncan and his budget with a strong emphasis on infrastructure, particularly as it related to supporting the needs of municipalities and those who use our roads and take advantage of the water and sewer capacities, as we all do in this province; and in this budget with Minister Sorbara again, in this instance focusing on a great variety of areas which he spoke so eloquently about. So it is a great pleasure in this, the fourth budget of this mandate.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I request that you consider whether there is quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Please continue.

Mr. Arthurs: I was pleased; the interjection allowed me to turn a page. My count across the floor, certainly, as the clerk identified as well, indicates that we have quorum, and if folks look around they might find that.

It is a pleasure to rise on Bill 187, at the time of third reading of our Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, and speak a bit and follow on Minister Sorbara's comments.

We're building on achievements over the previous years. It is not a one-off budget, but truly it is a budget that positions us for a much brighter tomorrow than we had in the past. It is aimed at helping Ontario businesses and building on the Ontario economy, among any other number of matters.

I mentioned that when we came to office in 2003 and were faced with that first budget time frame we found ourselves in a bit of a dilemma. I suggest that those in the leadership capacity, the Premier, the Minister of Finance and cabinet—there were some difficult choices to be made—were faced with a \$5.5-billion deficit. I think they were really faced with a difficult choice of doing, in my view, one of three things. They could abandon the policy objectives of the government—abandon health care, abandon education, abandon young people in the province—in the interest of the balanced-budget strategy.

That wasn't an acceptable strategy. We were weren't about to abandon the principles by which we were elected and the program which we were elected to implement.

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The second option would have been to run a much deeper deficit and put the economy at some risk, thus detracting business investment in the province, with those who would invest questioning whether or not we would ever see a balanced budget again and whether it would be sustainable.

The third choice at that point in time was to seek a tax increase to support the very public services—health in particular—that we were so committed to.

That's how we had to start. Since then, things have changed. We have moved from deficit budgets to balanced budgets. We've moved now into the second consecutive year where, with the year-end finished and/or projected this year, we will have a surplus position. And we've moved to balanced budgets projected on a go-forward basis into the foreseeable future of the four-year planning cycle that we work towards. From an economic standpoint, the business community can feel very comfortable that we have the finances of the province well in order.

When I first rose I spoke briefly to the roles I've had, including my time on Management Board throughout the mandate. It has given me a unique opportunity as someone who doesn't sit in the front benches to see the workings of government in the context of the corporate enterprise, not individual ministries, and how the discussion and the debate goes on around the priorities in-year for matters that may have had budgetary approval but have not yet had the business case built around them before they can get their full approval or, in some cases, partial approval. Not all money is released for programs until there is a solid business case built around those. So it's given me something of a unique opportunity—at least from my perspective—to see the workings of government from that particular capacity and that facet, and having seen it through more than one Minister of Finance and through more than one budget.

The plan, though, is not just about the business economy. It's not just about the fiscal house of the province in and of itself. It's about much more than that. It's about offering Ontarians the opportunities they need to find the successes that they so much deserve. We have to look for ways to provide those opportunities.

I believe Bill 187 is a piece of legislation that we could all celebrate because it's rooted in the values that I think we all share in this place. We may find different ways to get there on occasion, but I believe the principles are the ones that we all share. It's certainly another example of our government's commitment to investing in the great resource of this province, the people: the 13.5 million, or thereabouts, people of this great province of Ontario.

I'm confident in saying that the track record we have to this point is exemplary. We have addressed the matter

of health care in a substantive way. We have turned that corner. There is much yet to do, but we have turned that corner. We can see, as things like the LHINs roll out, that communities are beginning to embrace the opportunity to engage at a more local level in making decisions about health care themselves and are not depending on Queen's Park, this place, to make all the decisions on their behalf.

Since taking government in the fall of 2003, our schools are better places to learn. There can be no one I know of who would even consider saying that they are not better places for students to learn. Throughout the province, we have more teachers, better facilities, better programs, higher scores, higher rates of graduation, smaller class sizes—the list is virtually never-ending.

The colleges and universities continue to grow and expand in this province. Probably one of the biggest challenges in the sector is the success the Reaching Higher plan had, and that's that it attracted more students into the system, beyond all of our expectations, because they can see the opportunity and values being presented now in our college and universities for them to learn, to prepare themselves for the workplace, to prepare for additional academic opportunity, the chances of succeeding and building a future for themselves in the province, and there are so many more young people and adults that want that opportunity. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we've provided that very window of opportunity for them.

The health care system is better. This health care system is stronger and it's more responsive to the needs of Ontarians than it ever has been.

Infrastructure within Ontario, infrastructure that we so desperately need, is coming. You know, the \$30-billion ReNew Ontario plan provides wonderful opportunities for us on a go-forward basis to have that core infrastructure that's so important for a civil society to continue to be able to support its citizens and also grow and expand.

We're also ushering in with this particular budget a new era of economic strength in the province of Ontario. The minister spoke very clearly about some of the things that are currently in place to help. He spoke about legislating the capital tax elimination so that businesses know exactly where we're going on that front. That's one of the things business has been telling us throughout our mandate that they wanted to see happen. They would like it sooner. They would have liked it today. But they're pleased that it's legislated and that there is an end game in sight and they can plan their business cycle accordingly.

I've heard very good things in the past number of days about the capital cost allowance, where we're mirroring what our federal counterparts are doing. We're mirroring their efforts on the capital cost allowance and it's something that's being very well received in the business community. There's more to be done there yet. They would like to see other things done during the balance of this year in that regard. They would like to see that program extended both federally and provincially. We

look to our federal counterparts to act on that, and the minister, in his consultations with the federal minister, to see if there are strategies whereby that program might be extended to help strengthen the province.

I'm very proud to speak to the achievements that we've made during the course of this three and a half years in government on behalf of the people of Ontario and the progress that's being made in the province. But it's not a matter of sitting back at this point and suggesting that everything is done and that we can somehow rest on the successes to date. We know that there is much to do.

We want to continue, during the balance of this mandate on a go-forward basis, the very real and positive changes that are making this a stronger, a healthier and a more prosperous province for the people of Ontario.

This is what Bill 187 does by investing particularly in our children, in families in Ontario, investment for and on behalf of our seniors and those who are vulnerable within the province of Ontario, so that all Ontarians have a greater opportunity to succeed and an opportunity at success.

The minister in his comments spoke to the initiatives on the area of developmental disabilities. It's something we heard about during our consultations as a standing committee of all parties. It is clearly something that the minister heard about during his extensive consultations as the minister. Our government responded to that particular need, because it was a very high priority for those in Ontario.

Giving everyone a fair chance to succeed is simply the right thing for us to be doing. It's the right thing to do for our society and the right thing to do for the economy, because by offering more opportunities now, we can help build a strong and prosperous Ontario for decades into the future.

We want all Ontarians to be part of a province that prospers and all Ontarians to have an opportunity to enjoy the benefit of having the highest quality of life possible. We would like to be, and we strive to be, as a province, the best place in the world to live: the highest standard of living, the best quality of life we can have, the best health care system possible, the best education system possible.

There aren't too many of us in this Legislature—we all, at one time or another, have an opportunity to travel and see other parts of the world, either modestly so or more substantively, but I don't recall anyone in this Legislature coming back after being outside of Ontario, outside of the country of Canada, abroad from North America, coming back and saying, "You know, I found a place I'd rather live. I found someplace better than the province of Ontario to raise my children. I found someplace other than the province of Ontario that provides more opportunity, that cares for its sick in a better way than we do, that takes care of its seniors, that recognizes those who are vulnerable, that has a democratic system that works as well as ours." I don't recall anyone coming back and saying, "We'd rather find someplace else in the world to live."

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I recall in this Legislature the Premier coming back after visiting abroad and speaking about being the Premier of the best province in the best country in the world and recognizing in those travels how fortunate he is, and through him, how fortunate each of us is here in Ontario. Those are the reasons we're making opportunity for all more accessible and making success more achievable across Ontario.

It's not just about the economy, it's not just about health, it's not just about education and it's not just about seniors. There are other elements of our lives, other elements of our society that need attention and support and, on occasion, need us to pay attention so that society as a whole knows we're looking at it in a comprehensive fashion.

The minister spoke about how the bill fosters economic activity, but I want to tell you about a couple of other things it does. The vibrancy and economic health of Ontario's cultural industries is addressed in the budget. The entertainment and creative clusters help make Ontario an attractive place to live, work, invest and simply enjoy.

To recognize the contribution that artists are making to Ontario's economy and its quality of life, we've introduced new legislation, the Status of Ontario's Artists Act, 2007. This is a foundation piece of legislation. The status of the artist act was not meant to be the be-all and end-all for artists. It wasn't meant to address all the issues they put before us. It was intended to put into legislation a recognition of the artist—the first time that's been done—and to provide a foundation on which to build, because there are other ministries, other acts that would be have to be addressed to meet some of the needs the artists have put before us.

But the legislation is going to help us retain the skills and talents of Ontario artists, and it's going to empower them to continue transforming the cultural industries in the province of Ontario. It's going to help them in transforming the economy as it relates to the arts and society and be innovators in the world.

Bill 187, if enacted, and this piece of legislation within it, will help to give Ontario artists the recognition they so rightfully deserve at the provincial level, as well as the recognition they so rightfully get in their own communities. Each of us in our communities have arts organizations or theatres. In mine, we have the Durham West Arts Council, which is a very active organization that attempts to ensure that cultural activity in the arts is something in the presence of the community, that people recognize it's there. They put venues on, a variety of sorts; they support the arts community. But it gives it a real focus in the west part of Durham region, which is an important part of our community. I know that similar organizations, whether it's arts councils or theatre groups, exist in other parts of the province and get the support of the local communities, and it's important for us to be able to recognize them as well.

From an economic standpoint, Bill 187 will extend the 18% tax rate for the Ontario production service tax credit

until March 2008, so there's an opportunity for further tax credits; it moves us forward at least another year. The matter can be further addressed on a go-forward basis, but it provides some tax incentives yet for various types of productions in Ontario. This tax credit is an important part of supporting the Ontario film and television industry and, for me, of maintaining our competitiveness within this whole sector.

We're not only committed to the arts; we're also committed to seeing our children continue to prosper and progress in our school system through the investment of some \$781 million in school boards in 2007-08. This is a 17% increase since we took office in 2003-04. These investments are making our schools better places for young people to learn, a better environment for them to spend such an important part of each and every day.

I don't think that any of us can get enough improved test scores. I don't know who wants to see lower test scores. I think everyone in this place is pleased when students are more successful.

I don't know too many who want to see larger class sizes in the primary grades. I heard about smaller class sizes before I came to office, and continue to hear about that as we move to smaller and smaller class sizes in the primary grades. I'm not aware of too many of us in this place who want to see fewer students graduating. I think we're all pleased to see higher graduation rates, smaller class sizes and students doing better in the classroom. This additional funding is going to continue that trend. After all, children need to be given every opportunity to be as successful as possible. They need opportunities as early in life as possible, and thus the smaller class sizes in the primary grades are going to help provide that level of stability early on that will create success as they move forward through the system.

We teach a young person how to ride a bicycle. We don't put them on it and push them down the road, hoping that they stay up and watch as they weave and fall and injure themselves. My preference is to take the child with one hand gently on his shoulder and one hand on the bike, and take them down the road a little bit and get their balance, and let them go a few feet on their own. We can try again and be there with them and support them until they can do it well on their own. I think we should be treating them in much the same way in our education: provide the support, provide the guidance, provide the direction until they can manage it on their own.

We have to supply Ontario's youth and our society future leaders with opportunities throughout their entire developmental phase. That's why we're also proposing an additional \$390-million investment in post-secondary education. This is in addition to the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan in our second budget. A \$390-million investment in post-secondary education will go a long way to support the tens of thousands of new students who are now in our post-secondary education system. It will help to provide them with the opportunities to develop the skills necessary not only to work in the province of Ontario but to create and enhance the business oppor-

tunity here in Ontario. Investing in young people and in post-secondary education is not just about making them good for the workforce; it's about developing the necessary skills and incentives that will allow them to become the employers of the future, allow them to create the jobs of the future.

This fund will also help to quell the enrolment pressures that we've seen. We're also proposing to extend the apprenticeship training tax credit to 2012 and add six new trades to this particularly good program. Clearly, it's not just those who are going on to university that we have to be interested in. We need the skilled trades. We need to support, through apprenticeship training programs, those who want to move more quickly into the workforce and who find that the academia stream is not really where they want to focus their early attention. They will gain a lot of expertise in the field that they might not even gain in the classroom.

These extended training tax credits will help in providing more opportunities for young apprentices in at least six new trades. We all know there are many areas in the province where we're facing a dire shortage in the next few years—if it's not there today—in a number of trades, and we need to support the opportunity so that we have those tradespeople readily available.

By helping students succeed today, we can ensure that Ontario is successful in the future. Through Bill 187, the government has committed itself to offering the best and brightest possible future for the province and for the young people who are in it today. In addition to dealing with opportunities for young people, we know that our seniors are always in need of our support. In this particular budget, we're proposing to assist our seniors by enhancing, yet again, the Ontario property and sales tax credit, for the fourth time in four years.

One of the issues that we often hear about from our seniors is in regard to property taxes, particularly the education side. This particular enhancement in the Ontario property and sales tax credit for those who are more marginal and have more limited means as seniors would go a long way to supporting any cost they might have, whether it's direct cost because they happen to be in their own home, or whether it's more indirect cost because they are renting property, but to offset the equivalent to their Ontario education tax credit related to property in particular. This really is directed to a large extent at those seniors who don't have the opportunities that some others might. They don't have the pension structures. They are of more limited economic means.

1630

Overall, the proposed legislation, Bill 187, is about investing in people and expanding opportunities, because that's what we're planning for the province; that's what the plan for the province should be all about. That's why we're raising the minimum wage. When we came to office, we made a commitment to raise the minimum wage to \$8 during the mandate, and that has been accomplished. That's behind us now. So in this budget we're moving forward with increases in the minimum wage, by 75 cents a year, to \$10.25 over the three-year period.

That's why we're investing in affordable housing and, as the minister spoke to, increasing funding for Legal Aid Ontario. We've recognized that there are elements of being vulnerable in our community. There are those who need more of our support than others. Those who are working in the lower end of the wage stream need increases in the minimum wage. We've done some of that, and this budget will extend that process. We know that through housing allowances we'll provide an opportunity for those in more marginal housing to move into a different type of housing climate, or those who find housing difficult in and of itself to be able to acquire and keep housing. And we know that those who need legal services, who are more vulnerable, often can't get them on the open marketplace, and thus the need for additional funding to Legal Aid Ontario.

There's a whole variety of areas where we see and are acknowledging, through this budget, support for those who are more vulnerable. That also includes those who find themselves injured in the workplace. In order to ensure that no one is diverted along their way to success by a single unfortunate accident that occurs, we're enhancing our workplace safety and insurance benefits for more than 150,000 injured workers. Those will increase 2.5% each time, three times over the next 18 months, for a 7.5% increase in the benefits to injured workers. Often, injured workers find themselves in the most difficult situations. Some will be able to return to work. Many, maybe most, will be able to return to work, but there are those who find themselves in a situation where that's not going to be possible. When we can provide assistance to over 150,000 injured workers in Ontario and, through them, their families, it's the right thing for us to be doing.

This budget proposes an additional \$1.8-billion investment in the health sector for 2007-08. It continues and will continue, as governments go forward, to be the biggest cost that the province finds itself with. It's certainly past the 45% mark of our entire revenue stream, and there are those who project that it could move toward 50% as our aging population demands, because of their health, more and more services and more and more costs related to those services.

This funding will be used to shorten wait times in those critical areas that have been identified. It will be used to provide more doctors and nurses. The minister spoke well to the funding allocations and the movement to get those nurses there to the bedside, doing the preparatory work that's necessary before, during and after the time in which we need to see the physicians. These monies will provide improved access to emergency care. At a time when it's most critical for us to have that type of care, we need to ensure we're making those investments.

By working to help keep Ontarians healthy, we're protecting our most important resource, that being the people of Ontario. After all, each of us in this place is on the side of Ontarians. That's what we're here for. Whether it's young students, whether it's those who have moved on to post-secondary education or apprenticeship,

whether it's those in the workplace or those who find themselves not able to be in the workplace, or our seniors, they all need our support.

There are those in our community as well—and some in this place would be more adept at speaking to this than I, but I'll attempt it in part. We need to also support and recognize the francophone community in Ontario. I had the delightful pleasure for the first time to visit with the member from—Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry? I'd have to look to be sure. I'm hesitant to use his name in this place because the Speaker will probably rule me out of order, so I will just take a moment, and if I can—

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Take your time.

Mr. Arthurs: I will. That's not a problem. I will take all the time that's allotted to me. Glengarry–Prescott–Russell; that's what it is. I had the opportunity to visit his riding this past Monday as part of the Small Business Agency of Ontario. About 90% of that community, which borders Quebec and is in the very easterly portion of Ontario—it's probably about 60 or 70 kilometres north of the 401, that major corridor—are francophone. It's obviously a primary language. It was interesting; it was the first time I had a chance to visit that community and to really get a good flavour and a sense of the strength of our francophone community within various quadrants and sectors of the province. We don't see that here in the big city as much. Although there are many who are conversant in both official languages, in my experience, we don't have that dominance of activity within a community that you see there.

This particular piece of legislation, Bill 187, will be appointing a French language services commissioner and establishing the office of the French language services commissioner. During the committee hearings on this bill, the francophone community was very excited about this particular provision. They're very pleased to see that we're moving on establishing the services commissioner through the French Language Services Act, through Bill 187. It's an important part to ensure that the services that francophones are entitled to by legislation and under the charter are available and that there are means to ensure that those services get provided. There was great concern being expressed at the committee that without these types of initiatives, there are areas in the province of Ontario where our second-language capacity may be lost, and we can't see that happen. Being in Hawkesbury these past few days drove home for me particularly the need to ensure that we protect that very important asset within the province of Ontario.

The proposal would give regulation-making authority to the minister responsible for francophone affairs to ensure that both the quality and accessibility of French-language services will be improved throughout the province of Ontario, not just in those areas where there is a dominant francophone community but in those areas, quite frankly, where that doesn't exist but where we want to strengthen the capacity for Ontarians to use services in one or both of the official languages.

We are committed. This government is committed to supporting the vitality of that francophone community throughout Ontario and ensuring that francophones, like everyone else in the province of Ontario, get access to the services they need when they need them.

There are a number of elements of this comprehensive piece of legislation, Bill 187. I haven't even touched upon the Ontario child benefit today. I haven't spoken to the Ontario college of childhood educators. There's more yet in this bill than we've been able to address in the time allocated for our purposes.

I'm very pleased. I'm very pleased at what we've accomplished in this legislation. I'm very proud of what we've accomplished during this mandate in respect to supporting vital public services in the province of Ontario, enhancing those public services in areas where it's so critically necessary and, in this particular budget, dealing with areas of vulnerability. As the minister said, it hasn't all been done. It's certainly not finished. It's a recognition in a variety of areas that there are real needs and that we have to build upon those after a long period of time in which that was not the priority, after a decade in which that was not the priority. It's time that we refocused our attention to ensure that we strengthen Ontario for every Ontarian and, as others have said, effectively stand upon each other's shoulders. But we have to have a strong base on which to do that.

We're committed to the prosperity of this great province and the people who are resident and constituent here. We're committed to the health of the people of this province and to ensuring that they have quality health care and a healthy lifestyle. The creation of the Ministry of Health Promotion—I see the minister here this afternoon participating in this—is clearly where we want to move the agenda, away from simply taking care of illness, and creating a province where people are healthy and thus diverting some of those resources to other much-needed areas. So I'm pleased that we accomplished that during this mandate. It wasn't something that I'm aware that we set out to do at the very beginning. I don't recall it being a part of the overall platform, that we would have a Ministry of Health Promotion, but it became evident fairly early on among caucus and cabinet that there was a need to change the channel on health care, and creating a Ministry of Health Promotion was a way to change that channel.

1640

For the province to be at its absolute best, all Ontarians must have the opportunity to be the best-educated, most highly skilled, healthy, productive, and—better still—innovative in the world. Unless we can create an environment where we are the most innovative through our education and training, we won't be able to compete in the generations ahead. We're not about to try to compete on low wages. That's why we've moved on the minimum wage. It's critically important that we become highly innovative in what we do and the means by which we create business in the province of Ontario.

The job's not going to be finished until each of the challenges that have been set out have been met and

every opportunity that we can see has been seized by the people of the province of Ontario and every Ontarian gets their fair shot at success—opportunity for each.

Bill 187, our proposed legislation, to some extent, but not solely, will level the playing field to provide opportunity for progress, not just for those of us who might be a little bit more privileged. For those of us who work in this environment, a somewhat rarefied environment at times, we live in a different world than a lot of Ontarians. We have to ensure, in what we do, that we continue to remember that we do live in a different place than others and that we provide opportunity not just for the privileged few but for all Ontarians.

I always remain optimistic that as we move through the legislative process, as the debate continues on something as important as this budget bill, with all of its elements, members of this House will give very serious consideration to their support. I hope, at the end of the day, when the vote is called, that the vote on this bill could be unanimous.

I want to thank this Legislature for the time this afternoon and I want to thank the minister for his insight, the work of his ministry in particular, the staff, the bureaucrats who worked so hard on this, for the work that they've all done.

Our time is not quite up, but I'm sure there are other members who might like to join in this debate during the course of the time we have left between now and 6 o'clock. I remain optimistic that we'll continue in this place for this debate over the next hour and a quarter, and that it won't be interrupted by us having to take half an hour out as bells ring. I'd much rather spend the time in debate hearing from the opposition parties about their interest in the bill, about their interest in the budget, about how they would like to see education improved, about what they see as priorities in their communities in respect to health care, about how they feel about those who are vulnerable in our communities, about how they feel about the need for public housing and supportive housing in the community, about how they see innovation and growth and prosperity in the province. I'm hoping they'll take the time, the hour and a quarter that's left for this afternoon, to engage in this debate and have the opportunity to put their comments on the record. It seems counterproductive to have the bells ring for half an hour and not have the opportunity to hear from the opposition in respect to their concerns and their interests and their priorities and their view of the budget. There hasn't been, it doesn't appear, a lot of interest, as the minister said, during question period about the budget. If one can assume from that that there's a high degree of satisfaction, certainly we'll be happy to see, at the end of the day, the budget supported in a unanimous fashion.

In the absence of that, there is an opportunity now for the opposition to put themselves on the record in respect to Bill 187 and the 2007 McGuinty Liberal budget.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member from Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: First of all, let me just put in perspective, in the very brief time I have—

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me again. I have erred. I understood that this was in rotation, but it is not. There are questions and comments first. Sorry. Questions and comments, then, the member from Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you very much, Speaker.

First, let's get the information straight that we're presented with. We're presented here with an omnibus bill. This has 41 schedules and 275 pages. In it, there are a number of parts that I agree with, to be clear, on innovation, the Ontario institute of technology. I would be supportive of a number of measures. But for the most part, what I'm most upset with is where they say one thing and where they're actually doing something else. That's kind of reminiscent of their election process. It sort of circumvents the issue.

They took great pride in saying that it's a child-friendly budget. In the brief time I have, let's look at the child benefit payment. That clawback provision was part of their election platform. The NDP were at least consistent on it. That clawback was to low-income families under our government. What you've done here is you've quite seriously circumvented the real debate. You aren't giving them back the money. The first year, each family would get \$250. The value of that is \$1,100. They won't get that full amount until 2011. If I dare say, it's a bit deceptive.

If you want to know the real outcome, they're spending \$22 billion more. Have you got a doctor? Can you get services for seniors? You're paying more and getting less. That is, quite frankly, the overarching message.

What are the independent stakeholders in the economy saying? I'm reading, briefly, a headline from the National Post in early April. This is a report from the CAW. It says that in five years, 105,000 GTA manufacturing jobs have left. This economy is in serious—and they're limping to the finish line, the election on October 10. I have very little faith that this budget is anything more than an election-style budget. With that, there will be more to be said later on this particular aberration.

Mr. Marchese: This is a Liberal don't-believe-it budget. It is a litany of empty gestures and pre-election promises from a chronic promise-breaker Liberal government. That's what this budget is.

The Minister of Finance and the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge were talking about what they're doing to help those most vulnerable citizens of Ontario. The Minister of Finance stood up and said, "Mike Harris was so bad. They cut 21% of welfare rates to those most needy individuals in society." You get the impression, when he attacks the Tories, that he is going to fix it. And what do the Liberals do? The first year, a 3% increase; the second, zero—that's how generous they were in the second year: zero; 2% the third and 2% the fourth year. That's how generous they have been. That's how they've fixed the welfare system for those most needy individuals.

Look at the national child supplement program that was clawed back by Harris, and McGuinty was going to fix that when he got elected. That's what he promised. Three and a half years later, he does nothing of the kind. Two hundred twenty million stolen by the Liberal government—they've not fixed the problem that the Tories had caused. Then they say, just before the election, "We're going to fix it," with the rolling out of a five-year period to end the national child supplement program. That's what these Liberals do.

Look at the \$10 minimum wage. Under intense pressure from New Democrats and the Toronto Star, they relent and say, "Oh yes, we're going to do the \$10 minimum wage and it's now going to be \$10.25," in three years' time. That's how they deal with our most needy citizens of Ontario.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I always find it amusing to listen to the Conservative caucus. They talk about wanting to invest in health care, but Mr. Tory, the leader of the Conservative Party, is clearly on record as indicating he wants to cut \$2.6 billion from the health care budget. The constituents in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean want to know—

Mr. O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock, please.

Mr. O'Toole: The Speaker recently has indicated in his remarks that comments that are not correct or in fact are false—and he's a minister. He should not be attributing statements to Mr. Tory that were not accurate.

1650

The Acting Speaker: The statement has been made but, with respect, it is not a point of order. Please continue.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No. I stopped the clock as fast as I could. You have one minute and 39 seconds. Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Watson: The fact of the matter is that John Tory does want to cut \$2.6 billion from health care, so my constituent in Ottawa West–Nepean have a series of questions. They want to know what the Tory party is going to cut. Are they going to cut the three new operating rooms at the Queensway Carleton Hospital? Are they going to cut the expansion of the Queensway Carleton Hospital, phase 3? Are they going to cut—

The Acting Speaker: I remind the member that you're commenting on the previous speaker, and I don't believe that any of that was discussed. So please continue.

Hon. Mr. Watson: These are all items that are included in the budget: a 21.5% increase to Queensway Carleton Hospital budget; the cancer centre treatment at the QCH; health centre status for the Nepean Community Resource Centre; three new free vaccines for children; the CHEO cardiac unit, which the Conservative Party wanted to shut down and move to Toronto; 15 new operating rooms at the Ottawa Hospital; increased resources to the community health centre budgets; new funding for long-term-care homes; funding for Roger's House at

CHEO; and prenatal screening for 28 different illnesses at CHEO.

There was an additional \$1.8 million invested in health in 2007-08. These are the kinds of investments that have come to the community that I represent. The people of Ottawa West–Nepean want to know how John Tory is going to cut \$2.6 billion out of health care and at the same time improve health care with an aging population. It makes no sense whatsoever.

I'm proud to be part of a government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, that is investing in health care in the Ottawa region.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): To follow my colleague from Durham and also the member from Trinity–Spadina, I too have concerns about this bill. There are many parts of the bill that are applicable to what Ontarians need and want, but there are too many parts of this bill that really miss the mark.

The previous speaker talks about all the investments that are being made in hospitals in his riding. I would love to stand up here and boast about investments made at Joseph Brant hospital. There aren't any. This government closed 60 beds in the last three years at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. But in not having \$40 million to give to Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, there is enough money in this budget to give \$50 million to Magna Corp. I found that astounding and an insult to folks waiting for appropriate health care in my community.

The Stronach centre has been given \$50 million. There is no open application process, and that is consistent with the kinds of issues we've been talking about in this House for two weeks: no open process for applications by agencies that help immigrants. I think the financial help that Magna is getting is not something that was transparent. It was not announced in this budget and yet it is being attached to this budget.

I think we need transparency and accountability, and we need Ontarians to benefit from the money this government has had in surplus.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge has two minutes.

Mr. Arthurs: I want to acknowledge and thank the members from the ridings of Durham, Trinity–Spadina, the Minister of Health Promotion and the member from Burlington for their comments. I'm going to encapsulate some of the things we're doing in the little bit of time that's left.

Over the mandate, we've increased the ODSP and OW rates three times. We are increasing WSIB rates 2.5%, three times each, over an 18-month period. We've introduced in this budget the Ontario child benefit. That's going to benefit 1.3 million children during the rollout period to the tune of \$2.1 billion. That's far more than we were able to support under other programs. We're providing a \$100-a-month housing allowance to tens of thousands so they have better housing accommodation. For seniors, we've increased for the fourth time the Ontario property and sales tax credit. These are the types

of measures. Each of them by themselves may not seem to be dramatic but, in combination, these are the types of measures that go to the heart of supporting those in Ontario who need our direct support.

In the 30 seconds or so that are left, I want to take a look at what others are saying outside of this place. Anna Sado, the president of George Brown College: “We salute the Ontario government for actually making the funds available for the purposes for which they were intended.”

Tyler Charlebois, the director of advocacy for the College Student Alliance: “After 15 years of underfunding and seeing classrooms and buildings crumbling at their feet, the McGuinty government is investing additional funds to renew our learning institutions for the future.”

There are more comments.

Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I’m going to split my time with the member for Durham. It’s a pleasure to have a chance to comment here, despite the guillotine motion of the McGuinty government.

Mr. O’Toole: What are they afraid of?

Mr. Hudak: I’m not sure. My colleague asked what they’re afraid of. I guess they’re afraid of real debate on the incredible increase in spending under the Dalton McGuinty government, with no results for taxpayers. We’re seeing a significant increase in portables in the province of Ontario and longer waiting lists for health procedures. We’ve seen some 125,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs fly away from the province of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty’s regime. We had always been the engine of growth for all of Canada, a place where people would come from St. John’s, Newfoundland, or Victoria, B.C., to the province of Ontario to find work, to raise a family and to work hard, put money aside and provide a better future for their children or grandchildren. The place where people like my grandparents came, from then-Czechoslovakia, leaving eastern Europe at a time of great instability. They came to the province of Ontario because they knew that if they worked hard and played by the rules, they’d have a much better life for themselves, for their children and for their grandchildren.

But sadly, under Dalton McGuinty, it’s no longer the case. Ontario, believe it or not, was dead last in economic growth under the McGuinty government in 2006, projected by other banks for 2007 similarly to be at the back of the pack. This is not the Ontario that we all grew up in and not the Ontario that we know. Incredibly, a net loss of some 30,000 talented Ontarians to other provinces. It’s not the way it has always been. It has always been that Ontario was a net gainer of Canadians from other provinces or territories. We all know about the boom in Alberta. God bless Alberta. They’re doing well and I’m happy for them. But some eight other provinces and territories now have more Ontarians going there than they’re sending to the province of Ontario. That’s the kind of Ontario that Dalton McGuinty has built for us.

His high taxes, his runaway spending, his bizarre energy policy to reduce our hydro supply, which has been always been a strength for the province of Ontario, have caused a massive loss of well-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector. My colleague from Burlington and I have both, sadly, seen the loss of some major employers in the steel industry in Hamilton, Dahl manufacturing in Burlington, job losses at GM in St. Catharines and Bazaar & Novelty in St. Catharines to name just some. Niagara, Hamilton and Burlington have always had a strong manufacturing sector, but no longer under Dalton McGuinty.

What do we see instead? A sneaky tax increase on the mining company, one of the projects to cheer about in the far north. Benefit agreements negotiations with local First Nations to bring jobs and investment and prosperity to some places that haven’t seen that kind of investment ever. A billion-dollar investment by De Beers that would spin off in north-eastern Ontario down to Timmins. Already, hundreds of millions of dollars invested in that project. Premier McGuinty himself was on the soil when they broke the ground for the Victor mine and had boasted about the remote mining tax—begun, by the way, under the Progressive Conservative government to attract mines like this. Dalton McGuinty, when they were there for the photo op, talked about the tax discount for remote mines. But what does he do when he’s back here behind closed doors in the provincial capital, in Toronto? Without consultation, without any kind of notice, without any kind of signal, he jacks up the tax rate on this particular project to some 13% potentially, eliminating the remote mine holiday.

Think of the repercussions, not only in the province, in the mineral exploration sector, not only the betrayal by Dalton McGuinty of the First Nations in the area, the communities of Timmins and the surrounding area, but also the signal that it sends to the international community: “Watch out for investing in Ontario. We might just jack up your taxes, despite boasting we have the lowest tax rates.”

I can’t believe that the government is ramming this through in a guillotine motion. The finance critic, the talented member for Beaches–East York was there at the committee with me, Mr. Speaker. You may recall that. We were at the point where we couldn’t even debate the amendments on the floor because of the guillotine motion that caused votes to transpire without members having a chance to state their opinions or ask questions of the parliamentary assistant or staff.

We see today ongoing stonewalling by the Dalton McGuinty government when it comes to the slush fund, where it has become obvious that it’s not what you do, it’s who you knew in the Ontario Liberal Party that got you that grant. Hard-working groups like the Slovenian community at Bled Hall in Beamsville; the Italian Canadian clubs in Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Niagara Falls; the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, which helps refugees coming to Canada in desperate conditions, tries to help them out with their cases and help them settle when successful; Casa El Norte, another example—they

did not get dime one from the Dalton McGuinty government. Do you know why? They didn't even know that this funding existed. Only Liberal insiders seemed to have known about it, and, boy oh boy, like pigs to the trough, they benefited from this fund. There are many examples of direct connections with the Liberal Party, staffers in ministers' offices and grants going to groups with no questions asked, no accountability, no reporting mechanisms and no public knowledge of the account. As my colleague from Durham says, there's no accountability. These guys are spending money at a rate unseen before in the province of Ontario, a \$22.4-billion increase in total spending. As my colleague from Durham says, correctly, a band of pirates on shore leave would have shown more restraint than the Dalton McGuinty government and, quite frankly, caused less damage to the economy in the province of Ontario.

Given the continued stonewalling of the McGuinty government when asked to ask the auditor to come in and look at the \$32-million slush fund to benefit the Ontario Liberal Party, I have no recourse other than to move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1703 to 1733.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be counted by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 30.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member from Erie–Lincoln has the floor.

Mr. Hudak: I'm certainly very disappointed in the whipped votes by the government members. I know colleagues opposite are very concerned about the slush fund. I know that they didn't want to be heading into an election campaign in five months' time for the writ with this hanging over their heads. I suspect many members of the government behind closed doors want to see this investigated and grants go to proper agencies in ridings, rather than strictly those with Liberal connections.

We will stay on this course. We want to get to the bottom of the Son of Gomery affair. We want to find out exactly who the Chuck Guité is for the Ontario Liberal Party. Is it the minister himself? Is it the Minister of

Finance, as the chair of the Liberal election team? Is it Don Guy, the former chief of staff, now running the Ontario Liberal campaign? Until we get to the bottom of this, there is no use continuing with debate on Bill 187. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Hudak has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1736 to 1806.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise to be recorded.

Please be seated.

All those opposed will please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 5; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 11, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Sorbara has moved third reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell, but I believe it's going to—yes, I can see the deferral slip coming. I have a deferral slip dated May 9, 2007, that reads as follows:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Sorbara for third reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and others matters, be deferred until the time of deferred votes on May 10, 2007."

It's signed by Dave Levac, chief government whip.

Having received that, and the hour now being well after 6 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1808.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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