



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 17 March 2008

Lundi 17 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 17 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 17 mars 2008

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CURLING TEAMS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members' statements. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back, everyone.

I wanted to make a statement today on some really great people, and that is the curling teams of Sherry Middaugh, the Ontario women's curling champion, and the men's curling champion from Ontario, Glenn Howard's team of Richard Hart, Brent Laing and Craig Savill. As many of you sports fans might have known, Glenn just barely lost the Canadian title last night. Both he and Sherry are from my riding, and they both curl out of the Coldwater and District Curling Club.

But what is really important about this statement today is the kind of people that Glenn and Sherry and their teammates are. I want to tell you about two things in particular, one being a couple of fundraising events they've had this year. Sherry took part in a major fundraiser earlier in the month. At the Coldwater curling club, Curl for the Cure raised over \$25,000 on a four-sheet ice surface in one day, and Sherry lent her name to that. As well, both Sherry and Wayne Middaugh and their teammates, and Glenn Howard, have a project each year that they work on for the Huronia Hospitals Foundation called Curl with the Pros. This year, they raised about \$16,000 towards the Huronia Hospitals Foundation fundraising campaign.

I want to congratulate them on a great season, but more importantly, I want to congratulate them on the great people they are for our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, I'm just—go around.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm calling on the Minister of Health to ensure that residents in long-term-care homes in Aurora, in Newmarket and around this province

receive the quality of care that they deserve. He can do that by prioritizing our seniors and people with disabilities who are residents of long-term-care homes in his government's upcoming budget.

At a recent round-table discussion at the Aurora Resthaven long-term-care home, I heard from residents, family members and staff that the services and quality of care that can be provided at current funding levels are unacceptable. Edith Schultz, Resthaven's administrator, pointed out that cost increases have outstripped funding increases for four straight years.

I was presented with thousands of postcards, gathered at a number of long-term-care homes, including Southlake Village in Newmarket, the Willows in Aurora, and the King City Lodge. I will be sending them across to the minister. They are signed by residents, their families and staff, and ask that the government provide the \$513 million of additional funding to provide the additional staff and supplies necessary to ensure an adequate level of care and quality of life for residents. That is \$18.75 for each of the residents of long-term-care homes in our province.

We will be interested to see where our long-term-care residents are on this government's list of priorities when the Minister of Finance tables his budget.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise in the House today to speak about the McGuinty government's success when it comes to recognizing the importance of renewable energy. It is a key component to build a cleaner, sustainable energy future for Ontario. Thanks to this government's concern for the environment, Ontario is now a leader for wind power in Canada. We are building a clean and green energy future that supports a healthy electricity system and a healthy environment. We are on track to double the amount of energy we generate from renewables within the next 20 years. The McGuinty government knows that investing in renewables benefits the environment and the economy. Our government's energy program includes a culture of conservation. We will continue down the path to a cleaner environment while ensuring that the lights stay on.

Protecting our environment is a chief concern for the people of Mississauga South. On February 27 of this year, Mississauga city council voted unanimously to oppose the construction of a new gas-fired plant in Lakeview and to redevelop this waterfront site. The residents of Lakeview and Mississauga South have served our

province for nearly 40 years by hosting a dirty coal plant. This resolution is an important step towards the goal of protecting and revitalizing Mississauga's lakefront.

I extend my congratulations to the residents and to council on this historic decision and to the McGuinty government for its landmark renewable energy plan.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: An Ode for Ontario:

I rise today to speak in verse
Of a new, imposed provincial curse
So excuse me if my words are terse
But the situation's getting worse.

In this, the former industrial core
Where once we heard a mighty roar
Echoing from the factory floor
Silence looms; they work no more.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs disappear
And the Premier says, "There's nothing to fear."
"Simply find a new career
"In the business or the service sphere.

"Now you may have to move away
"Go back to school by night or day
"And take a hefty cut in pay
"But otherwise, you'll be okay."

And as workers despair, investors leave
With little reason to hope or believe
That the Liberal government will ever achieve
Any kind of fiscal reprieve.

Economists, you know they back us
In our plan to sever taxes
But the Premier and his crew relaxes
They'd rather grind partisan axes.

The economy has run amok
And the worker is the sitting duck.
But who's to blame for such bad luck?
The Premier? No, he'll pass the buck.

"Blame Ottawa, blame Flaherty,
"Blame China's new economy,
"Blame western Canada," says he.
"Blame anyone, but don't blame me!"

PESTICIDES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my turn this time, so thank you for recognizing me.

Originally from the city of Timmins but now Ottawa, Joel Theriault has travelled all the way from Ottawa to

bring petitions here to the Legislature that I will be presenting a little bit later. They have to do with the banning of pesticides and herbicides used on people's lawns. The petition is fairly substantial. We've got signatures from people from across Ontario; I believe there are some 2,000-plus signatures. So I first of all want to say to Joel: a job well done. That's what we call democracy in action.

1340

The issue here is a very simple one. There are better ways to control what is on the lawns that people don't want. You don't necessarily have to have herbicides to deal with it. There are natural products that could be used. In fact, if you take a look at the province of Quebec, we all know that the province of Quebec has been way ahead of Ontario and way ahead of the rest of Canada when it comes to dealing with this type of situation by way of legislation.

As I said, later on this afternoon I'll be tabling this petition on behalf of Joel. I would like to acknowledge Joel, who is in the gallery today, if he wants to stand up. If members want to take the time to go and talk to him, please do so. He has a lot to tell you and would appreciate your support.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. Reza Moridi: In 1999, initiated by a Canadian organization called Mother Language Lovers of the World and supported by the government of Bangladesh, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

This day aims at promoting linguistic diversity, multilingual education and awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

There are about 7,000 languages spoken in the world. It is estimated that within a few generations more than 50% of these languages may disappear.

Ontario is proud to be home to people from 200 different ethnic origins who speak more than 150 different languages. Every group is making contributions to the cultural and economic development of Ontario. Here in Ontario, diversity is our strength. Diversity contributes to our competitive advantage in the global economy.

The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2008 as the International Year of Language. This is a great year and a great place to celebrate linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

Dhonno Baad. Sagolun. Mamnoon. Do jeh. Dan-yabad. Shukriya. Shie Shie. Arigato. Grazie. Danke. Merci. Thank you.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Our government knows that students with the highest level of education have the best chance to succeed. That's why we're investing in

more opportunities, more assistance and greater quality for post-secondary institutions.

Under the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan, the McGuinty government has invested in more opportunities, more assistance and greater quality. In fact, this is the largest multi-year investment in post-secondary education and enhanced skills training in 40 years.

The Reaching Higher plan has been a success for students in Ontario. As an educator and administrator, I have seen first-hand the successes in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, in the three townships of Woolwich, Wilmot and Wellesley and in the two universities, Wilfrid Laurier University and Waterloo. Record numbers of students are finding opportunities in the province's colleges and universities: 100,000 more since the McGuinty government started in 2003—a 25% increase.

Where the previous Conservative government cut funding from colleges and universities, the McGuinty Liberals increased funding to \$4.2 billion in 2007-08. This is proof positive that the McGuinty government's Reaching Higher plan is helping our students not only to succeed but to excel.

LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak to what the McGuinty government is doing to support low-income families in Ontario. It's no secret that in order to have a strong economy it is critical that everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Just today, our government announced an investment of \$135 million over three years in a dental plan for low-income families, providing prevention and treatment services through public health units and community health centres. We will double our investment in the student nutrition program with \$32 million over three years. This allows for an expansion of existing programs that currently provide healthy snacks and meals to over 400,000 kids across Ontario. Now we can reach even more than that.

We will invest \$100 million to assist with repairs to 4,000 affordable housing units. Further, Ontario municipalities will also now be able to get up to \$500 million in low-cost loans from the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority to repair affordable housing. These investments complement others that this government has made in terms of continually increasing the minimum wage and in introducing the Ontario child benefit.

The keyword here is “invest.” This government invests in Ontarians because it is Ontarians who will keep our province and its economy strong into the 21st century.

NEXT GENERATION OF JOBS FUND

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's with pleasure that I rise in the House today to highlight the government's exciting Next Generation of Jobs Fund, an initiative that will

propel the Ontario economy forward. The fund is a five-year, \$1.15-billion strategy that will help innovative companies grow and create well-paying, sustainable jobs for today's workforce and for the next generation of Ontario's highly skilled workers. The fact is that the world needs green products, efficient technologies, health cures and treatments. Ontario has the strengths in these areas, and we can and we will create jobs right here in Ontario. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund will help do this.

For a company to receive funding from this fund, they must be able to demonstrate that their company will:

- secure good jobs for Ontarians;
- use or develop innovative technologies, processes and/or materials;
- help establish Ontario as a global leader in an emerging market;
- build on their existing Ontario base or create new expertise and research in commercialization;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions in target sectors; and
- create synergies among researchers, business people and entrepreneurs.

Ontario's Next Generation of Jobs Fund will fund companies that make everything from car parts to advanced health products to Academy Award-winning special effects technologies. As the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has said, we are “sending the message to companies around the world that if you've got a product that will grow your business and”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's my pleasure to note in attendance today Bruce Hefler, Ana Szado and Luke Hefler, the family of a new page, Ela Hefler. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITOR

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the members' attention to the east members' gallery. There's a young lady there; her name is Leah Jefferson, a third-year political science major from the University of Akron, Ohio. She is here as part of the Legislative Assembly intern program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of an order in council appointing the following members as commissioners to the Board of Internal Economy:

- the Speaker, who shall be Chair;
- the Honourable Christopher Bentley, the Honourable Brad Duguid, the Honourable Monique Smith,

appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council;

—Wayne Arthurs, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the government;

—Robert Runciman, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the official opposition;

—Gilles Bisson, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the New Democratic Party.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following reports were tabled:

—on January 21, 2008, the 2007 annual report of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth;

—on January 21, 2008, the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy report entitled *We are your Sons and Daughters: The Child Advocate's Report on the Quality of Care of Three Children's Aid Societies*;

—on February 14, 2008, the Integrity Commissioner report pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, concerning the request of the member for Welland regarding the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, Michael A. Brown;

—on February 26, 2008, the Ombudsman Ontario report entitled *A Test of Wills: Investigation into Legal Aid Ontario's Role in the Funding of the Criminal Defence of Richard Wills*.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultation 2008 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I would simply move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr. Hoy moves adjournment of the debate. 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 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hoy has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing to be counted.

All those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 63; the nays are 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on Hydro One Inc.'s—acquisition of goods and services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As Chairman of the public accounts committee of this Legislature, it's my privilege to table reports of the committee. The four reports I'm tabling today refer to work done by the committee prior to the provincial election in October. The committee considers parts of the Auditor General's annual report, asks for reports from ministries regarding what they are doing to improve on what the Auditor General observed, and criticizes and makes recommendations. The committee has great confidence in and works well with our present Auditor General, James McCarter. These four reports refer to sections of the Auditor General's 2006 report.

The committee has worked in a constructive and co-operative fashion over the past four years. We have been greatly assisted by two excellent, long-serving researchers, Elaine Campbell and Ray McLellan. They are now serving in other capacities in this Legislature, and on behalf of the public accounts committee I want to thank them for their past excellent work.

1400

I would be remiss in not recognizing two former MPPs, members of provincial Parliament, who served on the committee for long periods of time in their parliamentary careers. They are Shelley Martel of the New Democratic Party from Nickel Belt and Richard Patten from the Liberal Party from Ottawa Centre. Both of these individuals worked very hard and carried out their duties with integrity and diligence. As a result, I know that the citizens of Ontario have benefited from their participation greatly, and I want to thank them.

This report of the committee makes recommendations on how to improve the procurement policies and practices of Hydro One and asks them to report back to the committee on their progress.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the Ontario Realty Corp.'s real estate and

accommodation services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This second report of the public accounts committee deals with the Ontario Realty Corp.'s real estate and accommodation services. The Auditor General wanted to be certain that the public's interests were being protected when properties were being leased or sold. The committee made five recommendations to improve the accountability, as well as drawing attention to the need to recognize the significance of the community in the disposition process.

I move adjournment of this debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on community colleges' acquisition of goods and services from the standing committee on public accounts, and I move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I have more.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. The member for a brief statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief, but not that brief.

This third report I'm introducing assesses the purchasing policies of community colleges. The committee was generally satisfied that the community colleges were responding positively and meeting the deficiencies outlined by the Auditor General's report of 2006, and the committee believes that the community colleges are on the right track to improving their procurement policies.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on school boards and their practices regarding the acquisition of goods and services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This last report of the public accounts committee deals with the acquisition of goods and services by both public and Catholic school

boards, all 72 of them. This was the first time the Auditor General had undertaken a value-for-money audit under his now wider jurisdiction to look at school boards. He recognized that there were wide discrepancies in how money was being spent and accounted for in the use of purchasing cards by school boards.

As Chair of the public accounts committee, I contacted and corresponded with the director and chair of each of the 72 district school boards in our province, asking them to post on their websites four relevant policies to deal with expenditure controls. As a result, as of July last year, 56 of the 72 boards had complied. We look forward to all 72 boards complying, and the public accounts committee will be asking them to do so.

I move adjournment of this debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the supplementary estimates 2007-08 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of Transportation before the standing committee on estimates are reported back to the House as they were not selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed adopted.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to take this opportunity to recognize Virginia MacLeod. Virginia is the mother of Lisa MacLeod and she is here for the first time, visiting from Nova Scotia. Welcome, Mrs. MacLeod.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I thought that members might wish to join with me in congratulating Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Tilley, who has been serving the Salvation Army since 1952 and at this Legislature often for about 11 or 12 years. He'll soon be retiring and giving way to Captain Brenda Murray, who joins us as well in the east members' gallery.

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know all members of the Legislature would want to join me in congratulating the Brock Badgers,

who won the Canadian university men's basketball championship in Ottawa this weekend by defeating the Acadia Axemen by a score of 64 to 61.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CANADIAN MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN CANADIENS

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to promote the purchase of Canadian mass transit vehicles / Projet de loi 31, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun canadiens.

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

First reading agreed to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This bill sets out requirements for municipalities and regional transit authorities when purchasing mass transit vehicles with funds received from the province. Municipalities and regional transit authorities must give preference to mass transit vehicles whose final assembly is done in Ontario and where at least 50% of the total dollar value of the contract to purchase these vehicles is attributed to parts and labour originating in Canada. Et je demande aux députés de lire ce projet de loi et de nous donner ce support jeudi, quand ça vient au débat.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41 IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE LIEU 41 D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 32, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

First reading agreed to.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My private member's bill, Waste Disposal Site 41 in the Township of Tiny Act, parallels Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act, that this House passed in the previous Parliament. The horrible tragedy at Walkerton and the recommendations of Justice Dennis O'Connor from the Walkerton inquiry should have taught all Ontarians and the Minister of the Environment lessons that we cannot ignore. I would appreciate the support of all members of this House as this bill proceeds.

1410

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for a short statement.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Shortly after I was elected as a provincial member of Parliament for the riding of Niagara Falls in 2003, I was approached by a number of grandparents at my office. These were grandparents who were concerned, who were caring and who had difficulty in securing legal access through the courts to their grandchildren. Since then, I've received over 2,000 e-mails, 4,000 petitions and hundreds of letters and personal contacts with loving grandparents who find themselves in this tragic situation.

I'm pleased to introduce for the third time—and perhaps lucky for the third time—a bill that would give recognition to the rights of grandparents, where, in the opinion of the courts, it would be in the best interests of the child to ensure they have access to visit their grandparents. My proposed legislation, if passed, will amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents.

MADE IN ONTARIO ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'IDENTIFICATION DES PRODUITS FAITS EN ONTARIO

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to require merchandise that is manufactured in Ontario to be identified as such / Projet de loi 34, Loi exigeant que les marchandises fabriquées en Ontario soient identifiées comme telles.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for a short statement.

Mr. Dave Levac: This bill requires retailers to identify merchandise that is manufactured in Ontario. Its purpose will be to allow the showcasing of our high-quality made-in-Ontario goods and help identify and possibly encourage consumers to purchase Ontario-manufactured products in retail stores across the province. This bill could contribute to the growth of consumer loyalty

towards Ontario-manufactured products and strengthen our manufacturing industry.

I can only say that we can never have too much promotion of Ontario-manufactured goods. We have had many successes such as Foodland Ontario and the Ontario domestic wine industry.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Yakabuski exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item 37 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item 17; Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Mauro exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Ramsay assumes ballot item 65 and Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item 9; Ms. Aggelonitis and Ms. Broten exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms. Aggelonitis assumes ballot item 12 and Ms. Broten assumes ballot item 5; and that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 5 through 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes as proposed to the ballot list of private members' public business be approved.

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

Agreed to.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Before we proceed with question period, I would like to briefly say a few words about the conduct of business in the House. During the December sitting period, I had the opportunity to scrutinize proceedings perhaps more carefully than I have in the past, and from a more central vantage point. I observed at least occasional confusion about some of our proceedings, and I thought it would help to clarify those from time to time.

Question period provides an opportunity for all members of the Legislature to ask questions on matters of government policy. It is a time-honoured procedure used in Parliament to allow the legislative branch to hold the executive to account. I would ask that members keep this in mind when their colleagues are answering and asking questions, and afford them the respect that they and we all deserve. The use of moderate language and limited interjections is advised. If I can't hear the question or the

answer, it is quite likely that you can't either. That means that it is too noisy in this place and I will find it necessary to interrupt and restore order.

While I know that it is not a practice that comes naturally to most of us, speaking in the third person can go a long way in improving the atmosphere in here. If honourable members speak through the Chair rather than directly to each other, it has the effect of reducing the likelihood of personal attacks during heated exchanges. Finger pointing and direct confrontational language never fail to diminish the dignity of this chamber.

In keeping with the practice established by Speakers before me, I will be mindful of the clock, specifically the time taken up with each individual question and answer. When 10 seconds remain in the allocated time, I will call for the question or the answer to be completed, as the case may be. This should not be seen as an opportunity to turn away from the Chair in an attempt to eke out extra time, but rather as a warning that it is time to wrap up.

With respect to the introduction of bills, I believe there may be some misconception about what is permitted in the statement that can be made to coincide with that proceeding. At the introduction and first reading stage, the sponsor of the bill is permitted to make a brief statement of purpose. This is a statement that indicates what the bill is to do. It does not go into further explanation about why it is being introduced, the impact it will potentially have, or how the party across the way should have introduced it themselves. The bill is being presented to the House for the first time, and, as a courtesy, the sponsor is identifying its purpose. It is not intended to be debate; it is intended to be brief. It seems to me that, in general purpose, most bills can be easily explained in 30 seconds or less. Anything more than that is likely better suited to a member's statement or the eventual debate of the bill itself.

These are but two areas in which I believe there is room for improved performance in this place. I hope that all honourable members will continue to keep the principles of accepted parliamentary conduct in mind as we carry out the business of this House over the spring sitting.

I'd just remind the members that often we have grade 5 students who like to visit Queen's Park and remember the wonderful things that we all try to teach students in school, so keep that in the back of your mind as well as you are answering or asking that question: How we act in here is what they take back to their classrooms.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: A happy St. Paddy's day to all. My question is for the Premier. Premier, Ontario was once the economic engine of this country, but under your government it has become one of the slowest-grow-

ing provinces in Canada, with reported growth below the national average since 2005 and the longest string of underperformance in 30 years. Don Drummond of the TD Bank, who I believe was an adviser to your government in the past, has said that the current tax levels in Ontario stick out like a sore thumb—his words—compared to the rest of Canada. But it doesn't have to be this way. Ontario has options. It has a chance with the upcoming budget to start to repair the damage done over the last four years.

Will you, Premier, commit today to reducing the marginal tax rate on new business investment to bring it in line with other provinces like Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and Quebec?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. I've been looking forward to this opportunity for us to discuss at some length the different philosophy embraced by the Conservative Party, apparently endorsed by the federal government of the day.

We believe it takes more than just cuts to business taxes in order to ensure that we grow our economy at the beginning of the 21st century in a knowledge-based, globalized economy. That's why, in addition to cutting business taxes—and the member opposite knows that we have recently eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers in the forestry sector, for example—we're also investing heavily in infrastructure. We're supporting innovation. We're investing heavily in the development of the skills and education of our people. We also believe in entering into strategic partnerships with business to help them grow stronger. That, to my way of thinking, constitutes an intelligent, thoughtful plan to grow the economy.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The federal Minister of Finance's concerns are real; he's genuinely concerned about this once-great province slipping into have-not status under your leadership. The capital tax should be gone today, and it would have been if this government hadn't abandoned the plans put in place by the previous Progressive Conservative government. Under the Liberals, this tax will remain in place for the next two years. That's a clear example of why, after almost five years of Liberal inaction, Ontario now finds itself almost dead last in the country for economic growth. The government's on the wrong track. Ontario's going one way and the rest of Canada in another.

Premier, will the upcoming budget correct your government's mistakes and eliminate the capital tax for all business immediately?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it would be helpful to all of us to cast our minds back to the consequences of a dangerous and reckless obsession with tax cuts. Again, that was embraced by the Conservatives when they were in government. They left us with a \$5.6-billion deficit. They closed our hospitals. They declared war on public education. They fired nurses by the thousands. They fired water inspectors.

We're not going to pursue that particular path. Ontarians have said no to that particular approach. We are

investing in our schools. We are investing in the skills and education of our people. We are investing in our health care system. We are investing in infrastructure. We are investing in partnerships with the business community. That, again, to my way of thinking at the beginning of the 21st century, is how to grow the Ontario economy.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The former government created over a million new jobs in this province and took hundreds of thousands of people off of welfare. We want to compare your government to another—I think it's more analogous to the Bob Rae government going down the same path. What this government doesn't understand is that they're sacrificing short-term gain for long-term pain. Slower economic growth means less money to fund the very programs you're talking about protecting. In order to prevent a decline in program funding, the government must act to reduce levels of taxation. Rather than throwing a few lifelines to select companies, making corporate and small business tax rates competitive keeps all businesses afloat. That's the best way to protect health, education and social program funding.

Premier, is your government going to get us back on track by eliminating the capital tax for all business and reducing the overall tax burden for all business in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't recall the Conservatives campaigning on this particular platform. They're obviously taking their leadership cues from elsewhere these days.

The Conservatives don't like to be reminded of this, but the fact of the matter is that when they embraced that dangerous and reckless obsession with tax cuts—and it has some simplicity to it, and a certain degree of elegance: Tax cuts create jobs. But what the Conservatives didn't tell us was that tax cuts resulted in closed hospitals; resulted in poor-quality health care for the people of Ontario; it resulted in a tax to our system of public education; it resulted in a loss of our capacity to monitor the safety of our environment and it resulted in a \$5.6-billion deficit. During the last four years-plus, we have 450,000 net new jobs in the province of Ontario as a result of our economic policy. We intend to keep moving forward.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier again—and it's clear that the Premier is operating the Ontario economy on a failed ideology and a wing and a prayer, and he wants to get rid of the prayer.

Last year, for the first time since the 1991 recession, Ontario's economic growth was the slowest in Canada. All five major banks rank Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces for economic growth this year. Private sector job growth is the slowest in Canada.

Premier, how many more statistics are needed to convince you that your wrong-track economic policies over the last five and a half years simply aren't working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me speak to a very specific case. In Belleville just a couple of weeks ago—I was there with the Minister of Agriculture and we had the opportunity to attend the official opening of a new Kellogg's plant. It's the first one located in North America in the past 20 years. I spoke with the gentleman there and I said, "Why did you choose Belleville? Why did you choose Ontario?" He said there were three things in particular: (1) because of the quality of our agricultural products; (2) because of the quality of our workforce, the skilled labour; and (3) because we came to the table prepared to compete with US governors, Republican and Democrat alike, with \$9.7 million by way of a five-year, interest-free loan.

The quality of our workforce, the quality of our agricultural product and the fact that we have a government that is prepared to partner with business when it makes sense to do so: That's the reason Kellogg's came to Ontario; that's the reason we have 100 more jobs there today; that's the reason I have confidence in the Ontario economy.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think the old saying "More nerve than a canal horse" applies to that response.

Clearly, the statistics I cited earlier weren't enough. I'll give you some more. Disposable incomes in Ontario are among the slowest-growing in the country and this year will again trail the national average. The number of single people on welfare is almost 103,000. That's an 11% increase since September 2003. Since January 2005, we've lost over 180,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs; last year alone, it was 64,000.

The path to redemption, the road to rebuilding, is clear: Lower taxes, cut red tape, secure an affordable, reliable energy supply and you will turn the economy around. Why do you persist in ignoring the obvious?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't and I can't share the negative, pessimistic outlook of the opposition. As a result of our auto sector strategy, we landed \$7 billion in new investment in Ontario and over 7,000 jobs. Our advanced manufacturing strategy, by putting forward \$500 million—I think we've used up some \$180 million of that so far—has landed over \$800 million in new investments, and we have some 3,800 new jobs to speak of. Again, when it comes to the forestry sector, we put over \$1 billion in place as a strategy to work through this time of global competition and low prices.

What the leader of the official opposition refuses to acknowledge is that when he's talking about cutting taxes, he's also saying, "Let's cut services that people have to be able to count on." I am not prepared to close hospitals; I am not prepared to cut funding for our textbooks; I am not prepared to cut jobs in the province of Ontario, including those of the people who happen to inspect our water supply.

1430

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The "Don't worry, be happy" riff is growing a little tiresome. In fact, in some communities it's downright offensive; those communities have lost thousands and hundreds of manufacturing jobs.

The Premier is sticking his head in the sand. In 2007, Ontario reported a net loss of over 36,000 people to other provinces, almost 15,000 in the third quarter alone. That's the biggest out-migration in the province's history, yet he's over there singing, "Don't worry, be happy."

For the first time in 30 years, our unemployment rate exceeded the national average. According again to Mr. Drummond, your friend at TD Bank, Ontario's subpar economic performance brings us closer to being federal-handout status; in other words, a have-not province.

Premier, how much further are we going to slide? How much longer are you going to keep us on the wrong track before you start to show some leadership with respect to our economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me remind the opposition in the House generally of our five-point plan to grow this economy. First of all, we are in fact reducing business taxes, and the member is aware of that. In particular, we've eliminated the capital tax for manufacturing and the forestry sector, and we cut it by 21% retroactively for all other Ontario businesses.

We're investing \$60 billion over 10 years in infrastructure. That's roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and the like. That creates jobs in the short term and enhances our productivity in the long term.

We're supporting innovation and good, high-paying jobs in the future. We're helping creative Ontarians turn their ideas into Ontario jobs.

We're also partnering with business. I know the leader of the official opposition does not believe in that, but we think it's really important to help businesses which are prepared to make an additional investment to ensure that we get them on their feet and in the race.

Last, but certainly foremost, we are investing in the skills and education of our people. We have 100,000 more young people in colleges and universities today than we did back in 2003. That is real progress.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Over 200,000 good manufacturing jobs and over 10,000 good forest sector jobs have been lost under the McGuinty government. New Democrats have outlined a job stimulus strategy that has been praised by economists, labour leaders, business leaders and workers.

My question is this: In the March 25 budget, is the McGuinty government going to take action on a job stimulus plan, or will it continue to allow thousands of good manufacturing jobs to disappear in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're very much looking forward to presenting our budget in this House and to continuing to find ways to address some of our economic challenges. I think the leader of the NDP understands that when it comes to things like the value of the Canadian dollar, the price of oil, the faltering US economy and the impact of globalization generally, those are factors over which we do not have control. But we do have control

over the level of our taxation, for example. That's why we continue to cut our business taxes. We do have control over the level of investment we make in our people. That's why we continue to invest heavily in skills and education. We have control over the level of investment in infrastructure. That's why, for example, we have a 10-year, \$60-billion investment-in-infrastructure plan. That's the largest of its kind ever. We are creating over 100,000 jobs with that investment alone.

So yes, I very much look forward to presenting the budget in this House. My Minister of Finance will be doing that. We look forward, in that document, to addressing in a further way some of the economic challenges before us at this time.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think what I heard was the Premier looking for excuses. The issue is manufacturing jobs. Ontario is the manufacturing heartland of Canada, and Ontario is losing manufacturing jobs at an alarming rate. The Premier refers to everything other than manufacturing. The fact is, other provinces are taking action. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec have all implemented manufacturing investment tax credits to sustain manufacturing jobs in those provinces.

My question is this: In this government's March 25 budget, will working people see action on a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to sustain manufacturing jobs or not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP likes to claim that we are not doing anything to support manufacturing, but he's just not prepared to acknowledge what we are in fact doing.

Again, in our fall economic statement there was a \$1.3-billion tax cut. That included the elimination of capital taxes for manufacturing and forestry in particular. We're also going to support the federal government's initiative when it comes to dealing with the capital cost allowance so we can continue to accelerate that. That's something that helps manufacturers as well. We're also continuing to reduce business education taxes in the province of Ontario. That is also an initiative which the NDP voted against. The leader of the NDP does not support our plan to assist the auto sector in the province of Ontario, which landed \$7 billion worth of new investment and 7,000 jobs. We have not had support either for our advanced manufacturing strategy, which has landed \$850 million in new investments so far. So it's one thing for the leader of the NDP to claim we are not doing anything for manufacturing, but the record actually tells another story.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Oh, I think your record tells a story. Since your much-ballyhooed advanced manufacturing strategy was announced almost a year ago, another 50,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared. I heard banks, insurance companies and oil companies say they liked the reduction in the capital tax because they raked in billions, but in fact, manufacturers who are not making any money got very little benefit from those measures.

The reality is this: Today the Toronto Stock Exchange has dropped another 400 points, thousands of people are losing their jobs every week, and people are increasingly worried. Provinces like Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec have taken action. My question is this: Is the McGuinty government going to take specific action in the form of a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit, or are we going to see the loss of thousands more manufacturing jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think for Ontarians generally and families in particular, the question that weighs on their minds is, "What is the responsible thing to do in the circumstances? What is the right thing to do in the circumstances?" They know that we don't have control in this Legislature—notwithstanding claims to the contrary from my friends opposite—over the value of the dollar, the price of oil or what's happening to the US economy. But we do have control over the investments we make in the skills and education of our people. That's why we will continue to make those investments, and this budget will reflect that. We do have control over the investments we make in the quality of the health care available to all our families, whether they are employed or not, and that's why we will continue to invest in the health care system. We do have control over the level of investment we make in infrastructure, and when we build roads and bridges, not only does that enhance our productivity in the long term, but it creates hundreds of thousands of jobs in the short term. Those are the kinds of things that Ontario families expect of us. Those are the kinds of things that we will continue to do.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier seems to want to talk about everything other than the loss of manufacturing jobs, but that is the issue, Premier: the alarming loss of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs in a province which is based upon manufacturing.

Last Thursday I was in Thunder Bay, where the workers at the Bombardier transit manufacturing plant are still trying to understand why the McGuinty government scrapped this province's Buy Ontario program in 2005. On Thursday, Mr. Bisson's Buy Ontario public transit bill will be debated and voted on. My question is this: Will the Premier guarantee the quick passage of our Buy Ontario bill to help secure the jobs of those workers at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I thank the member opposite for his question. I assume that's the same Bombardier plant that I visited when I was in Thunder Bay, and I can tell you that the greatest concern that was raised with me at that time was the absence of the NDP leader's support for our plan to build a new subway here in Toronto, that those cars wouldn't be made in that plant.

I've said this, and I know the leader of the NDP understands this, as does his colleague: I think it's really important for us as a government to ensure, as much as

reasonably possible, as we invest billions of dollars in new infrastructure, and public transit in particular, that that translates, again as much as reasonably possible, into Ontario jobs. We are carefully considering that, we'll take a look at Mr. Bisson's proposal, and we look forward to making an announcement shortly on that particular matter.

1440

Mr. Howard Hampton: Those workers in Thunder Bay understand that a new subway line in Toronto means nothing if you continue your policy of saying that the transit equipment can be purchased from Mexico, China or anywhere else. What they want to see is a Buy Ontario policy.

Last week I was also in Hamilton, the heart of industrial Ontario, where an astonishing 30% of Hamilton's manufacturing jobs have disappeared in the last four years under the McGuinty government. That's \$1.1 billion of wages taken out of the Hamilton economy. My question is: In the March 25 budget, will the McGuinty government commit to investing the \$350-million federal vulnerable-communities money in hard-hit communities like Hamilton, or are they going to continue to be ignored by the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would appreciate any pressure whatsoever that the leader of the NDP could bring to bear on the federal government. They have talked about this particular money, but it has yet to flow, and the sooner we can receive it, the more good we can do with it.

With respect to our support for Hamilton, again, the leader of the NDP does in fact know that we worked with Stelco to the tune of \$150 million to participate in its restructuring process. We've given a loan to Dofasco to help reduce the company's production costs and increase its competitiveness. Hamilton will benefit from the government's plan to cut business education tax rates by \$540 million. When fully implemented, Hamilton businesses will benefit by close to \$9 million annually. We are pleased and proud of the fact that we have been able to work with people in Hamilton, as we are with other communities right across the province.

The fact of the matter is that we remain the second-largest manufacturing centre in North America, right after California, and we look forward to continuing to work with the manufacturing sector to ensure that they have a bright and promising future.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier may want to try to ignore it, but your government has received about \$800 million in various labour market development funds from the federal government already. Communities like Hamilton, where literally 30% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared, are wondering when they are going to see some action from the McGuinty government on these issues.

But it's not just Hamilton. Windsor has watched the loss of literally 30% of their manufacturing jobs. It is a community that is desperately in need of an aggressive, targeted, refundable tax credit such as Quebec has,

Manitoba has, Saskatchewan has and New Democrats advocate. My question is this, once again: Will the people of Windsor see an investment of those federal funds? Will the working people of Windsor see a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit so that we can hopefully sustain some of the manufacturing jobs there? What will we see on March 25, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have been proud to invest close to \$1.5 billion in the city of Windsor in the last four years; that ranges from everything from new infrastructure to a new casino, a new satellite medical school, including a number of partnerships with the Detroit Three. None of those were supported, by the way, by the leader of the NDP. He voted against those. I'm afraid to think of what would have happened to Windsor had we not been there working with the community through these various support initiatives.

We continue to look forward to working with the city of Windsor, the city of Cornwall, the city of Hamilton, the folks in the northwest, northeast, eastern Ontario—any particular community in this province. We've continued to maintain that the best way for us to move forward is not through a reckless cutting of corporate taxes on corporations which happen to be profitable, but rather to invest in our five-point plan.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in your first four budgets you pursued an outdated economic policy of high business tax rates, personal income tax increases, more red tape, higher energy prices and a whopping 43% increase in government spending. The results, Premier, are in. The manufacturing sector in Ontario has always been a powerful job creator in Canada until Dalton McGuinty came along. Some 180,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs have left the province of Ontario. Premier, as you may know, if you combine all of the manufacturing job losses in all of the other provinces, Ontario's manufacturing job losses still exceed that total.

Members of the finance committee from the opposition have put forward plans to reduce the tax and red tape burden. Will you ensure that your fifth budget does include that central policy to create jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Over the last four years this government has eliminated a \$5.6-billion structural deficit. It's eliminated a deficit in health care by investing in over 100 new hospital projects in Ontario. We have hired more than 8,000 new nurses. We have hired 2,500 teachers. And while doing that, we have cut the business taxes that the business community told us to cut.

This government's record is one of job growth since taking office. This government's record is one of responding to those sectors that have faced difficulties and responding to those families that have faced difficulties. Overall, there have been 456,000 net new high-paying jobs in Ontario since we came to office, and

we will continue to work with those sectors and families that are facing difficulties as a result of world economic conditions today while we invest in health, education, infrastructure and a healthier business climate for all Ontarians.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me say that again: Ontario has lost more manufacturing jobs under the Dalton McGuinty government than all of the other provinces combined. When it comes to the manufacturing sector, capital expenditure has decreased by \$745 million since 2003—an actual decrease in investment and businesses. And sadly, Ontario is the only province in Canada to have experienced a decline in manufacturing sales since 2003—a \$1.8-billion decline in manufacturing sales.

Since this Legislature last met, we've seen Kitchener Frame lose 147 jobs, and CanGro in Niagara, citing the high costs of business in Ontario, has laid off hundreds. That's on top of something like 1,000 job losses at National Steel Car in Hamilton.

I say to the Minister: Clearly your outdated economic policies have harmed our economy. Will you reduce the tax and red tape burden in your budget next week?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's no doubt that the manufacturing sector is facing challenging times, and there's no doubt that it's affected Ontario the way it has because Ontario still is the manufacturing centre of Canada and the second-largest centre in North America. But I'll say this: We reject their philosophy of corporate tax cuts for profitable companies. That's not going to benefit a company that's going to lose money this year. That's why we focused on the capital tax. That's why we focused on the business education tax. But more importantly, we've invested in highly skilled education for our workers so that they can transition to the new jobs. We're investing in a better health care system, we're investing in better schools, and we're investing in partnerships with the business community, with First Nations, and with others to ensure that all Ontarians can respond to the challenges in the economy and that we can all share the prosperity that we richly deserve.

This is still the best place in Canada to do business, it's the best place to invest, and we're proud of Ontarians and proud of our investments to assist this economy through challenging times.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier. This morning, an Ontario court sentenced Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig Chief Donny Morris and five other members of the First Nation to six months in jail. What is the substance of their offence? They went to court to defend their aboriginal rights after the McGuinty government failed to fulfill its constitutional duty to consult and accommodate the First Nation in terms of their rights and interests.

My question to the Premier is this: Is this the new relationship with First Nations that the McGuinty government boasts about—send First Nation leaders to jail

when they defend First Nation rights and interests after the McGuinty government has failed to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

1450

Hon. Michael Bryant: As I said before, we in this government believe that we are going to better the living conditions of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. We're going to be able to create more jobs, we're going to be able to improve educational opportunities, and we're going to be able to improve the relationship between the First Nations government and the government of Ontario at the negotiating table, and not through the courts. That's why I was up in KI every month this year—I was there in January, February and March. I felt confident that we were getting closer in terms of the arrangements that we were trying to create to rectify a situation that involved a company, Platinex, that admits now it got off to a terrible start with KI. I'm going to continue to work with KI to try to come up with a resolution that is acceptable to them.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It seems now that the McGuinty government is trying to cover their tracks after the fact. In 2006, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig was granted an injunction against mineral exploration. In his decision, the trial judge referred to the McGuinty government's failure to meet its constitutional obligations to consult with and accommodate First Nation rights and interests. I want to quote the trial judge: "Despite repeated judicial messages delivered over the course of 16 years, the evidentiary record available in this case sadly reveals that the provincial crown has not heard or comprehended this message and has failed in fulfilling this obligation." It's very clear: It's the McGuinty government that's failed.

My question to the Premier is this: Since your government has failed, when are the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines going to resign?

Hon. Michael Bryant: What is important here is to find a way in which KI can in fact work with a company to the betterment of their community. That is what Chief Morris, Sam McKay and council have said to me.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm trying to get the answer out, Speaker.

The finding today obviously is extremely disappointing. As I've said before and will say again, the way through this is not through selective readings of decisions; the way through this is not through litigation efforts; the way through this is to come to an agreement. The ultimate expression of consultation is in an agreement. The people of KI said to me, "Don't give up." I won't give up.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Health. Neovascular wet age-related macular degeneration is a degenerative condition affecting central

vision in people typically aged 50 and over. A new drug called Lucentis works to maintain and even improve vision affected by wet AMD. Approximately 10,000 people are treated for wet AMD each year. In my riding alone, I received a petition with over 400 signatures, and last week the minister announced a plan to make Lucentis available to people who suffer from this condition.

Could the minister explain this plan to the House?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member from Hamilton Mountain for her question. Many in this House over the years have been in the circumstance where cases have been raised about our ability to provide support for people with age-related wet macular degeneration. I'm very pleased that we've added Lucentis to the Ontario drug formulary as a general benefit. What that means is that it is offered as a prescription at their discretion, without any prescribing guideline from Ontario's doctors. Those who are on the Ontario drug benefit, which includes those 65 years of age or older, living in long-term-care homes, in special care residences and people receiving social assistance, will receive the benefit, and the Trillium drug plan—an initiative of Bob Rae—which provides for catastrophic support, would be available for other Ontarians who might be in a circumstance where the costs are too extraordinary. We anticipate that 10,000 individuals per year will benefit from the gift of prolonged sight or improved sight, at a cost over three years of approximately \$100 million.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: The government's plan is good news for Ontarians suffering from wet AMD. However, on Friday the media began to speculate that the government has restricted access to this drug to people who were diagnosed more than three months ago. Some people, including a member of this House, went as far as to suggest that the government was misleading Ontarians with the funding announcement because some people might be excluded. Minister, could you clarify for this House who will be eligible to receive government funding for Lucentis?

Hon. George Smitherman: Of course we're disappointed that any confusion might have arisen around this, but to describe it again, the drug is on the Ontario drug formulary as a general benefit. Those who would receive access would be those who are on the ODB, aged 65 and older, those living in long-term-care homes, special-care residents and people receiving social assistance. But because it's a general benefit and on the Ontario drug formulary, it means that the benefit of the Trillium drug plan, an initiative of Mr. Bob Rae, would be available to them to provide catastrophic support so as to protect people against having to pay too large a share of their income to provide for it.

I repeat again that such a general benefit, without any prescribing guidelines—a doctor can prescribe this. I regret that any confusion may have arisen. But we're pleased that 10,000 Ontarians per year will benefit from the gift of prolonged sight, and in some cases we're pleased that sight can also be regained. This is a \$100-million investment over three years for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The minister will know that federal Liberal finance critic John McCallum tabled a motion asking the House of Commons finance committee to hold public hearings to determine why non-bank asset-backed commercial paper was sold to Canadians. Specifically, his motion states that the hearing should determine “whether federal regulators and other stakeholders could have done a better job in anticipating the crisis and/or reducing its cost.”

I would like to know whether Ontario's Minister of Finance agrees with his federal colleague Mr. McCallum that financial institutions whose investment decisions resulted in devastating losses to Canadians should be held accountable and whether the public is entitled to answers concerning the decisions that were made.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The asset-backed commercial paper issue and the state of the housing market in the US is manifesting itself in a variety of ways. For instance, a number of large Canadian institutions—the Caisse de dépôt, the Alberta treasury branches, CP Rail, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and Canada Post—have all invested varying amounts of money in asset-backed commercial papers, as have some of the largest financial institutions in the United States, that have resulted in varying results for each of those individual organizations that have invested in these facilities which have proven to be problematic.

In terms of the future, in terms of where all of this is going, I don't think anybody has an answer right now. Of course, Ontario has been actively participating in the resolution of this from the Canadian perspective. In the context of the future, of the resolution of the challenges, we see even the Fed in the United States this weekend has responded to a particularly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll agree—because I did it through you—I asked a very specific question: Does the minister agree that the public deserves an answer? Mr. McCallum has all-party support for the hearings which will take place in April. The fact that the Ontario Financing Authority invested some \$700 million of Ontario taxpayers' money, at a loss of over \$100 million, perhaps more—we're interested whether this Minister of Finance would agree to have the Ontario Financing Authority answer to the finance committee of this House, to be accountable for their decisions and why they made an irresponsible and imprudent decision on behalf of taxpayers in this province.

1500

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Of course, through estimates, the opposition can call the Ministry of Finance, the Ontario Financing Authority. As I pointed out to the

opposition in the winter session of the House, in fact the Auditor General has audited the books of the Ontario Financing Authority and found everything to be in order.

I would not like listeners to take away the position or the opinion based on the premise of the member's question that in fact the situation is as problematic here in Ontario as it is for other large organizations; that's simply not the case. The fact is, yes, through estimates committee, absolutely, the Auditor General has the ability to look at our books every year, and signed off on them in the past year. I imagine he'll be looking at them again this year. So there is accountability. There is transparency. The initiatives undertaken by the McGuinty government in the whole area of transparency and accountability have replaced the secrecy that went on here for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Today the Premier dished out more thin gruel to the poorest and neediest citizens of this province. He announced that the Liberals' affordable housing repair plan is a fraction of what the city of Toronto alone requires. He announced that their recycled dental care strategy has more nerve than a sore tooth. And now he adds insult to injury by expanding a poverty hotline to nowhere. Half of Ontario's poor will soon be able to discover that the housing, the money and the help they need simply do not exist. To the Premier: When will Ontarians see a real anti-poverty plan instead of the sham announcements of the last two days?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm glad to see the member opposite supporting our plan to reduce poverty in this province, but I can tell you one thing: We are not going to take the simplistic approach that the NDP has become famous for. We are going to take a thoughtful approach. Over the next several months, we are going to be developing a comprehensive property reduction strategy, complete with measures and timelines. We are going to be listening to people across the province, and we will be developing a strategy that will make a real difference in delivering better opportunities for people in this province.

Mr. Michael Prue: As I take that answer, it appears that you're going to phone up and you're going to find out that there's nothing available at all. Ontarians are hungry for a real poverty strategy, not a telephone to nowhere. That means real investments in building affordable housing. It means having a real living wage. It means ending the clawback. It means increasing social assistance rates for our poorest families. Instead of telling the poor to dial a hotline to nowhere, what will the McGuinty Liberals do to ensure that vulnerable Ontarians receive proper nutrition, shelter and health care now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This government is an activist government. We have introduced the Ontario child benefit, which is going to be rolling out every month starting in July, which ends the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. It goes far beyond ending the clawback, and you know that. The minimum wage is going up at the end of this month to \$8.75, on its way to \$10.25.

This government isn't going to take lessons from you on what we need to be doing to reduce poverty. The housing people were asking for \$30 million; Minister Watson today delivered \$100 million.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This week, Canadian Agricultural Safety Week began. On average, 30 men, women and children in Ontario were fatally injured every year between 1990 and 2000, according to a report published by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program.

Farm safety is of significant interest to the constituents in my riding and the many farm families that reside in Chatham-Kent-Essex. The number of fatal injuries on farms has decreased on average over time, but there's much more work to be done. One fatal injury on a farm is one too many.

Minister, can you please tell us what kinds of initiatives your ministry has taken to make sure that farmers in my riding and across Ontario are safer?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thank you very much, Speaker, and to the member as well, a farmer himself who always brings excellent questions about the agriculture industry.

I'm very happy to say that Canadian Agricultural Safety Week does give us an opportunity to reflect on the hard work that has been done over the years to improve farm safety. My ministry provides \$120,000 each year to the Farm Safety Association. The Farm Safety Association is the lead agency to promote farm health and safety. In partnership with OMAFRA, they are working on a number of projects. For example, they will publish safety articles in local farm publications right across Ontario. They will also deliver the farm accident rescue program. This brings together rural volunteer fire departments and trains them in how they can, when they arrive at a fire on a farm, appropriately attack that. The Farm Safety Association has also piloted a play yard safety program in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Pat Hoy: Minister, as you would know, this is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. On average, 115 people are killed and another 1,500 are seriously injured in farm-related incidents across Canada each and every year, according to the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association.

Farm safety is an issue of concern to the residents of my riding. They want to know that this government is taking the issue seriously. Can you tell us what our government is doing to improve the safety of agricultural workers not only in my riding but across the province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: May I extend—just taking a look at the name of the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, even his riding sounds Irish—a happy St. Patrick's Day to the member.

Workplace health and safety on farms is an important issue to all involved in the farming sector. Given our government's demonstrated commitment to reducing workplace injuries, I can assure you that enhancing workplace health and safety in farming operations is a priority. That's why we've extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to cover farming operations. Since June 2006, farm workers have had the rights other workers already have, including the right to know about workplace hazards, the right to participate in workplace health and safety decisions and the right to refuse unsafe work. This is helping to reduce farm injuries and fatalities, lessening human suffering, reducing economic costs and contributing to a stronger economy for the whole province.

We know there's more work to be done, but we're proud of what we've done so far in reducing workplace injuries.

DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is to the Premier, also the MPP for Ottawa South.

The United Nations has rebuked our city, the city of Ottawa, for violating international drug treaties because of this government. The government has gone behind the city's back and funded a crack pipe program despite their protests. The Shepherds of Good Hope say needle distribution such as that funded by the provincial government is too dangerous. And today, an Ottawa Tim Hortons is considering removing its washroom to stop drugs from being shot up there.

The government's anti-drug strategy is bizarre. It is more about handing out crack pipes and not about providing drug treatment. Will the Premier respect the United Nations, the government of Canada's laws and the city of Ottawa and stop funding unaccountable programs that hand out drug paraphernalia and place it in the hands of drug dealers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I would like to thank the honourable member for her question. I note in her question and in some of her media comments and the correspondence she has written to me that she uses the words "philosophical" and "ideological," but in point of fact, our strategy is motivated by only one thing, which is to do our very best to limit the transmission of infectious diseases like hepatitis C and HIV, based on evidence. While she does quote the United Nations, they themselves are in conflict with the World Health Organization, which is part of the UN, who speak about the

necessity of doing our very best for people who are addicted.

But I do agree with the honourable member that this is not one solution. It's one part of a continuum to engage people in the conversation and get them thinking about the things they can do to mitigate the risks to their health as we look, especially in the Ottawa community, to enhance our capacity for treatment. I will look forward very much to working with the honourable member as we seek to do that in response to the calls from that community.

1510

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate that the government has one side of the story, but they are long on the supply side of drug paraphernalia and short on the treatment side. Their spending priorities are all wrong.

Last week, this Liberal majority defeated my request for a drug rehab centre for youth in the city of Ottawa. Yet in today's Ottawa Citizen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs is onside with that as a priority. I need to know: Which is it? This government is all over the map. There is no balance. There is no acknowledgment that prevention and treatment of drug abuse should be our priority as a province. Will the Premier commit today to funding a drug treatment facility in the city of Ottawa so we can get the kids—your government has provided crack pipes to—off drugs, off the streets and on the right track?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's the honourable member who has a little bit of an ideological burr under her saddle. To put things in perspective, we're spending a relatively few number of dollars, several hundred thousand at the very most, on the distribution of products designed to prevent the spread of infection, whereas we're spending hundreds of millions of dollars on our existing addiction treatment capacity.

But where I think the honourable member is especially not particularly up to date—I spent a lot of time in Ottawa talking to the media about this, and I was very clear to say that we're interested in working with the Ottawa community on enhancing the continuum and most certainly enhancing access to treatment, which in the very first answer I acknowledged was insufficient. My colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been working with the city of Ottawa on this. We're expecting a report within a month or so, and I can tell the honourable member and all members of this House that it is most certainly the intention of our government to enhance treatment capacity for individuals in the Ottawa community and indeed in other parts of the province of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Over a year ago Minister Smitherman said that a guaranteed minimum standard of care in nursing homes would treat people like—and he used the word "wickets." Then he flip-flopped and promised he would

mandate a minimum standard of care by regulation instead of including it in Bill 140. I would like to know what his views are today.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for her question. I believe, though, she has misunderstood one part of it, and I'll attempt in the first answer to address that.

We're certainly the government that will be returning the minimum standards in the province of Ontario. But some people would like those minimums to pretend that every single resident in an Ontario long-term-care home requires exactly the same amount of care. My only point was to ensure that as we do move forward with the adoptions of standards we don't have a one-size-fits-all solution, because obviously some residents in long-term care will be requiring a higher degree of support. I can tell the honourable member that when her party was in office they had a standard which was not enforceable at 2.25 hours, and I'm very pleased—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: No, in an urban area, we walk. But I do want the honourable member to know that we're proud, through investments so far, that our hourly standards are at about 2.95 and that Shirlee Sharkey will be giving advice as to how we may make further investments, which is most certainly at the heart of our plan for long-term care.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Minister, I remember your tears four years ago when you promised a revolution in long-term care. Then, over a year ago, you promised a guaranteed minimum standard of care. Instead, you reduced the serious problem of inadequate care to jokes about incontinence products. Minister, don't you think that our loved ones in long-term-care homes deserve a guaranteed minimum standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on care a day?

Hon. George Smitherman: On this matter, I have always been guided by the issue of dignity, which I experienced in the circumstances of the last seven and a half months of my father's life, when he was almost entirely dependent because a stroke had reduced him to the capacity to move his eyes. In the comments that I made about incontinence products, I most certainly did not trivialize the matter and I most certainly did not offer these as jokes. While I may have made a mistake, and I apologized for it very clearly, for speaking about things that I was contemplating, to have a new honourable member question my sincerity on this point is rather disappointing. I'm privileged to be part of a government that since 2003 has invested 9.55 million additional annual hours of care in long-term care, and I'm ever so proud to be part of a government that intends to continue making investments to enhance the quality of care for our residents in long-term-care homes.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I've got a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. One of this government's major achievements in its previous term was protecting over 1.8 million acres in the green-

belt in the Oak Ridges moraine. I know that many of my constituents and, I'm sure, constituents throughout the province like to explore Ontario's vast agricultural land and the green space that was protected. My own community of Oakville has a history of protecting and promoting its green space, and I've consistently voted to protect and expand Oakville's precious green space.

Minister, you've recently announced that you are looking into actually expanding the greenbelt. Can you tell me when we might see some action on this very important file?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me commend the member from Oakville, one of the most eloquent defenders of the environment in this Legislative Assembly, who has been supportive of the greenbelt since day one.

We're very proud of the greenbelt. It's 1.8 million acres of protected green space. It's good for agriculture, it's good for the economy and it's certainly good for the people of Ontario. On February 28, we celebrated the third anniversary of the greenbelt. This was an initiative that was in our 2003 platform. The vision, the guidance and the leadership of our Premier and my predecessor, the member from Kingston and the Islands, saw to it that we were protecting for generations to come this important natural asset. I'm very pleased to report that we started the consultation process with municipalities so that in fact we can expand the greenbelt, because this government will never shrink the greenbelt.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister. That's excellent news for the people of Ontario and all of Oakville. I'm really pleased to see that we are moving forward on this commitment.

As I said, I know my own community, the town of Oakville, recently passed a resolution asking you if you will protect lands further in the north Oakville natural heritage system as well as natural conservation lands within the Oakville land assembly. I want to tell you that I support Oakville's resolution. I commend Mayor Burton and the Oakville council for taking action on this issue and hope to see more of it around the province. It's important, we all know, to protect Oakville and Ontario's green space for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

Minister, could you tell me today: From the application that you've received to date, will Oakville be considered for greenbelt expansion in this matter?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to commend the town of Oakville and Mayor Burton, whom I had the opportunity to chat with at the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt luncheon just a few weeks ago. Once the criteria and the process are finalized, we'll encourage Oakville and other communities to apply. I would urge all members of this House to go out and encourage their constituents to go out to the public consultation sessions we're holding across the province. The one on April 10 is taking place at the Ramada hotel in Guelph. It goes from 5:30 to 9. The information is available on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website.

There are five consultations taking place across the province. We want to hear from the public, we want to

hear from landowners and we want to hear from municipalities. We look forward to making announcements in the future to expand this very important natural asset, something we are all proud of.

How appropriate that on St. Patrick's Day I received a greenbelt question from a gentleman named Mr. Flynn.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: In the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance announced a program to help horticulture, beef and the pork industry get through tough times because of "higher input costs, the stronger Canadian dollar and lower market prices." But many young and expanding farmers are disqualified or receiving next to nothing. Payments to farmers were based on sales from 2000 to 2004, and if 50% of their income in 2005 and 2006 wasn't from pork or beef, they didn't qualify.

Ontario Pork tells us that many of these young and expanding farmers who had pork in 2007 are the ones with the greatest need. The Veyhof family in my riding are young farmers who are struggling to feed their four children and hold their farm. How do I explain to them that they aren't getting any help to get through these tough times, but their neighbour, who retired and got out of pigs two years ago, got a cheque for \$80,000? Minister, how many retired people in Florida are getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

1520

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it is important to make some very important clarifications with respect to this program. We had the opportunity to meet with the cattle producers and the pork producers, who explained to us the fact that over a number of years there's been significant hardship in their particular sectors and that this government had a role to play. Our government has stepped up to the plate. We have recognized that over a number of years, in the hog, cattle and horticulture sector, there has been serious hurt. That is why the dollars have flowed the way they have. That is why they have been delivered the way they have to farmers who, over a number of years, have suffered losses.

I think the point that the honourable member wishes to make is important, when they suggest that there are no resources available for them. There is the Canada agricultural income stabilization program. They can apply for cash advances. There are interim payments. So our government is there on many levels, in many ways, to support the agriculture industry in the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm please to present a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

"Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

"—repainting the crosswalk;

"—a new overhead flashing-light crosswalk sign;

"—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed; and

"—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone."

I present this on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham, and I'm pleased to sign it.

PESTICIDES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have here a whack of petitions, as we say in good anglais, signed by a number of people from across Ontario, over 4,000 signatures collected by Joel Theriault. It reads as follows—and I think I'll need probably two pages for all of this because it's kind of heavy:

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to prohibit the use of chemical herbicides by the forestry industry, given:

"(1) the non-chemical alternatives which currently exist to meet vegetation management needs and which are in use in other parts of Canada, such as Quebec;

"(2) the firm stance against the non-essential use of these chemicals which has been taken by the medical community, having regard to human and environmental health. See www.domtar.org for additional information;

"(3) the significant possibility of violating the rights of all Canadians (especially resource-dependent aboriginal communities) to clean drinking water, edible plants, wildlife and fish;

"(4) the largely unfulfilled commitments already made by the federal government to reduce dependency on pesticides and herbicides. See <http://nfsc.forest.ca/strategies/strategy5/html> for additional information; and

"(5) the questionable performance of the federal government to regulate pesticides (including herbicides) for the health and safety of Canadians. 'The federal government does not have reliable, up-to-date information about pesticides that it needs to manage them effectively. It lacks significant information on the use of pesticides and exposure to them. Research on health impacts is very limited' (1.134 AG). 'Overall, we conclude that the federal government is not managing pesticides effectively' (AG 1.136).

"In several cases, the measures listed on pesticide labels, even if followed, appear not to have been enough

to prevent environmental damage’—2003 Auditor General report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons, Chapter 1: Managing the Safety and Accessibility of Pesticides. Report viewable at www.oag-byg.gc.ca.”

I have three pages here to carry back all of these petitions put forward by Joel. I would give them to one, but I’m sure there would be something like a compensation claim coming.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I present to you today about 2,000 signatures that were presented to me during the rally held at Queen’s Park on January 16. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

“Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

“Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of great scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

“Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as ‘surplus’ to its academic needs and subject to sale for development;

“Whereas the observatory occupies an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect such a property of historical, scientific and natural significance from being used as commercial development.”

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor Johns Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I affix my name in full support.

CONTAMINATED PROPERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas in 2002, Hydro One Inc. accused Schmidt Flowers Ltd. of contaminating the Hydro One Dryden, Ontario, site with diesel fuel and threatened to make them liable for the cleanup;

“Whereas in June 2007, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment concluded that Hydro One Inc. contaminated its own Dryden, Ontario, site with diesel fuel spills from its own above ground diesel fuel tank;

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

“—to acknowledge the Ministry of the Environment’s conclusion that Hydro One Inc. contaminated its own property;

“—to acknowledge that Hydro One Inc. wrongly accused Schmidt Flowers Ltd. of contaminating the Hydro One Dryden, Ontario, site with diesel fuel; and

“—to acknowledge that Hydro One Inc. should compensate Schmidt Flowers Ltd. for damages and costs incurred over the past five years.”

This has been signed by literally hundreds of residents of the community of Dryden, Ontario, in my constituency, and I have affixed my signature as well.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn’s and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

“Whereas this disease requires patients’ fast access to public washrooms;

“Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

“Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations; and

“Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

“We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it, and give it to page Ramandeep, who is here with me today.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition sent to me from the Gentle Shepherd community church just outside of Flesherton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this.

1530

HOME CARE

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

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and I have affixed my signature. Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was sent to me by Harold Chambers and Wayne Sim, whom I'd like to thank. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital

project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I thank those who signed the petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Alexander to carry it for me.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas GO Transit:

"—has been plagued with frequent service disruptions, often leading to trip cancellations and stranding passengers at GO stations;

"—has consistently shown poor on-time performance, which declines each year;

"—has blamed many of the disruptions on long-delayed construction projects it has recently undertaken;

"—has cited underfunding by previous under Ontario governments for delaying critical infrastructure improvements necessary to handle GO's growing passenger volumes;

"—fails to provide accurate information when major delays occur;

"—shows little regard for passengers' schedules or concerns; and

"—just approved a fare hike effective March 15, 2008, in spite of consistently poor performance and customer service;

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

"—to require GO Transit to provide a rebate on fares paid when GO Transit equipment failure, late arrival of equipment, staff shortage or rail congestion results in a cancellation of trains or a delay of more than 20 minutes to final destination;

"—better and more timely notification of transit cancellations, modifications and delays; and

"—More cars added to trains to ease the overcrowding, which causes safety concerns."

I agree with this petition and I'm pleased to add my signature.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition about good basic health care in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

“Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians’ access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government’s efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams.”

Since I support this petition, I’m delighted to sign my name to it.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord’s Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord’s Prayer as part of its daily proceedings.”

I want to thank Bruce and Joy Osmond for sending these petitions to me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly received about the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre.

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures

that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four-fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I am glad that the following people have signed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DEBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRONE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2007, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is of course a pleasure to address my first speech in the Legislature by responding to the throne speech. I understand that custom dictates I use a portion of my inaugural speech to describe who I am and how I am here representing the riding of Dufferin–Caledon. As with most stories, it is not a direct route.

I grew up on a family farm in north Simcoe—Tay township, actually, as my colleague from Simcoe North takes great delight in telling everyone. My mom and dad raised seven children. I suppose you could say it was during the Jones family dinners and negotiating use of the family car that I first practised my debating skills. Hopefully, those skills will serve me well in the coming years on the floor of this Legislature.

Dufferin–Caledon has been my home for 20-plus years. David and I have been lucky to work and live and raise our children in a community that has made us feel safe and has offered us economic opportunities. Many of you will know it for its rolling farmland and beautiful ski and trail systems like the Bruce Trail, but if you really want to know Dufferin–Caledon, you must know the people. We have an incredible cross-section of families who have been in the community for generations, to newcomers who have found a jewel and work hard to protect it.

I was nominated on January 13 last year. There were six candidates interested in becoming the Progressive Conservative candidate in Dufferin–Caledon. Paul Hong, Jim Wallace, Drew Brown, Lynne Moore, Nick Garisto and I all saw the opportunity to carry the PC banner in the October election as an opportunity not to be missed. It was an opportunity because, as many of you in this House know, we have had some rather special individuals representing Dufferin–Caledon over the years.

I've had the opportunity to work with and learn from three special MPPs. David Tilson gave me the opportunity to work with him as his executive assistant beginning in 1991. David, as many of you who served with him in this House will know, was a great teacher on the importance of working for your constituency. I will be forever grateful to him for the opportunity he gave me.

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Ernie Eves also served the residents of Dufferin-Caledon and will be fondly remembered for moving forward two road bypass projects, in Orangeville and Bolton, that had been stalled for over 20 years. The Orangeville bypass is now built and has relieved much of the pressure to move vehicles through and around Orangeville. Bolton's bypass will assist our communities to move goods and services through the GTA more efficiently.

Finally, and most recently, John Tory was our member for two years. John learned a great deal about rural Ontario from farmers in Dufferin and Caledon. I was proud to be part of a team that worked with him when he was the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

Jennifer Walmsley, Bianca Lankheit and Kathy Boynton all worked hard to ensure that issues in the riding were dealt with quickly and efficiently. If you called with a problem in Dufferin, you had the best people to help you work through.

Over the course of that nomination over a year ago, 2,500 people took out Progressive Conservative memberships to participate in what I believe was the largest nomination across the province. Obviously, I was pleased to be chosen from the group of six to be the candidate of record for the Progressive Conservatives in Dufferin-Caledon.

I tell you this not to blow my horn but to reinforce that nominations are an important part of the process that brings us to this historic place. I'm confident that after a nomination race that spanned seven months and an election race that spanned 10 months, I've listened to thousands of people across Dufferin-Caledon tell me what is important to them and their families.

As a new member of the Legislative Assembly, I would never wish to suggest that the work done in this chamber is unimportant, but without the anchor of our ridings telling us what is important and what issues need to be dealt with by our governments, we would be poorly prepared to act appropriately. We risk becoming insulated from what is really important if we do not make the effort to connect and learn from people in our ridings.

I hope that this is an important consideration as the House leaders work together to make this place more family-friendly. Sitting Fridays, taking us away from the important work that occurs in our ridings, will not improve debate in this chamber. On the contrary, it may insulate us from the very people we need to hear from and listen to.

Today, in the beginning of what I expect will be a lengthy parliamentary session, we will have many opportunities to review, debate and, yes, disagree about

proposed legislation. Let's also make sure that we are given the opportunity to discuss, listen and learn from the residents in our riding, who will ultimately be living with these decisions. When we stop talking and start listening to the farmers who are struggling; business people who worry about the high dollar and lack of skilled workers; volunteer organizations who see where our legislation falls short in implementation; and out in the community when parents talk about their children's health and safety, it is then that I truly understand how important our role as lawmakers is.

During the orientation session, the Clerk and other staff who tried to prepare us for this role inside the chamber told us some of the history: how the eagle facing the opposition side represents the need to always be vigilant and the owl facing the government side, the need to listen. As difficult as that is, and particularly so when we have all been successful in a campaign where we carry our political stripes proudly, I know I have the responsibility to represent the entire riding.

As I begin my new career here and I listen to debates and review legislation that is brought forward by ministers and private members, I've made a commitment to the people of Dufferin-Caledon to review everything with the lens of, "Is it good for Dufferin-Caledon?" Unfortunately, political promises seem to mean less and less these days. Nonetheless, it is a commitment I've made to the people of Dufferin-Caledon and I intend to keep it.

It is through this lens that I must raise a number of concerns that I see with the throne speech of this government. Having just completed a large consultation process—you may know it better as an election campaign—I know that many of the issues raised during the election are being ignored by this government, issues such as our community hospital, Headwaters Health Care Centre. Headwaters hospital is funded at one of the lowest levels of all community hospitals across the province, and yet the community it serves is growing at a faster rate than many other parts of Ontario. Headwaters's funding is falling behind because of the growth that Dufferin-Caledon is experiencing. This situation was verified in a recent government report prepared by the joint policy and planning committee, which reported that Headwaters's costs actually are 11% below the expected cost. In other words, our community hospital must make do with 11% less than other hospitals across Ontario. It's not fair to Headwaters or to the residents of Dufferin-Caledon. All candidates agreed during the election that it is now time for health and social services funding to be based on growth and population, not historical data.

This funding shortfall translates into longer wait lines in the emergency department and more individuals leaving our community to seek care for themselves and their family. The throne speech sets out an objective "to help more Ontarians receive care closer to home," but without more support for our community hospital, the opposite will happen. More residents of Dufferin-Caledon will need to travel outside the community to

receive the care they need. I was hopeful that the throne speech would talk about this important issue, but unfortunately it has been ignored.

During the provincial election, the Liberal Party committed to providing growth funding for the GTA/905 and Dufferin county areas. A PricewaterhouseCoopers report reveals the need is now, and yet the throne speech is silent on supporting the health and social services needs of high-growth communities such as Dufferin–Caledon.

Hospital funding is not the only health care issue facing my community. The Central West LHIN's plan—local health integration network—indicates our community has the lowest number of specialists, the lowest number of nurses and the second-lowest number of family physicians in the province.

A family doctor is the gatekeeper to all of the Liberals' primary health reforms. Many families in Dufferin–Caledon do not have a family doctor, and therefore they are shut out of the new family health team services referenced in the throne speech. Without a family doctor, our emergency rooms get overused and residents cannot access specialists. A comprehensive physician recruitment and retention strategy must be the government's priority, and yet no specific actions are mentioned in this throne speech.

In Dufferin–Caledon we are looking for some immediate relief with our transportation infrastructure. While we would love to see commuters be given more options than driving cars, in rural Ontario, roads and bridges are often our only option. Dufferin–Caledon cannot wait until 2020, and municipalities will continue to look to the province for help in repairing roads and bridges.

Perhaps if the government was willing to borrow an idea from our PC platform to spend Ontario's gas and fuel taxes on what they were intended for—our transportation infrastructure—we could stop the finger-pointing and get on with the job of fixing the problem. The solution is not to announce last-minute, end-of-year surplus bonuses. Our municipal partners deserve more consideration than a promise that “if we have a surplus and if you apply on time, then you can try and grab some of the leftovers.” It reminds me of something I was told at the ROMA conference last month: “As a municipality, I feel like a salivating dog waiting for a bone.” Now we are expecting the municipalities to fight over the scraps as well. That's not good budgeting and it's not fair to our municipal partners and taxpayers.

The only mention of agriculture—a ministry I will be watching closely, not only because I still have a family member operating on the family farm but also because my friend Wayne Innis will demand that agriculture issues not be overlooked for another four years—in the throne speech is for a risk management program for grain and oilseed, which is long overdue. But how about looking at how to improve the agriculture sector so that Ontarians know the value of eating locally grown products? And, as important, stop regulating farmers out of business. By the time we have convinced people to eat

local, there won't be any farmers willing to produce anything to sell because of your constantly changing regulations that end up adding costs to their production without compensation.

The Progressive Conservative Party and our leader, John Tory, believe the state of the province's economy, especially its manufacturing sector, is far and away the number one priority facing the government and the Legislature. As my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook highlighted in our pre-budget consultation dissenting report, I can assure you that businesses in my community are very concerned about the impact of a strong Canadian dollar and slowing economy. Yet the throne speech offers no specific plan to support our manufacturing sector.

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As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to work with our manufacturing partners and provide them with the tools to succeed. Businesses need a consistent environment in which to operate. They expect governments to look out for their interests and prepare for economic changes like skilled worker shortages, not implement onerous regulations with zero consultation, zero debate and, I would have to say, zero thought, like the February holiday.

If I can close with one comment, it's that we must do a better job of listening and learning from our constituents. There are so many talented, bright individuals out in our community getting down to business, making a difference in our lives. They have some incredible ideas on what needs to be done and where we need to focus our resources. Let's not limit ourselves to one ideological stand or become so narrow-minded in our deliberations that we forget whom we are here to serve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to congratulate the member on what was by far one of the better speeches you hear at the beginning of a session. I thought the member brought some interesting points but was also quite eloquent in her own way. I'm sure that the voice she brings on behalf of her constituents to this Legislature is going to be appreciated by those people she represents.

I know she wanted to talk about a number of issues which I'll get a chance to talk about later, so I won't do that in my reply to her speech. But I want to just say a couple of things. I agree: When you look at what this government says in its throne speech and what it does by way of actions, either in the last term or this term, you have a bit of a hard time trying to juxtapose the two of them and marry them together, because the government has a habit of saying really nice things. The government gets up, gives a throne speech, talks about what it is going to do, and we sit there and think, “Well, some of that ain't bad.” They're going to declare war on poverty; they're going to declare war on unemployment; they're going to do the kinds of things that need to be done to protect the environment.

But the member is right. You look at the actions of the government and you say to yourself, “Where's the beef?”

I look at the poverty file and I say that even where I come from in northern Ontario we have organizations that are desperately in need of support from the provincial and federal governments in order to assist them, such as a Good Samaritan Inn that provides basically a place for people to stay when they're on the street, and they can't get any funding from this provincial government. We've been going after that for the better part of six months to a year. People are at their wits' end. But this government says, "There's a war on poverty." I just want to say to the member, if there's a war it's a pretty silent one, because nobody sees the government out in the trenches doing the work that has to be done.

Mr. Tim Hudak: A cold war.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're a mile ahead of me. That's where I was going to end. Tim, you're good. I've got to say, you're really good.

If this government has a war going on on poverty, I'll say, like my good friend Mr. Tim Hudak, it's got to be a cold war, because there's not a lot going on when it comes to assisting the people who are most in need in this province.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I too would like to congratulate the member from Dufferin-Caledon on her maiden speech. I feel like I have many connections with Dufferin as well. Many of you know that I was a school board trustee for 15 years before I was elected to the Legislature. After the Tories decided that we should have school board amalgamation, my old board of Wellington became the Upper Grand board, which covers both Wellington and Dufferin. So, in fact, I ended up spending quite a bit of time in Orangeville, Shelburne, Grand Valley and all the communities in Dufferin county, which truly is a delightful county. It really is the roof of Ontario. Because it's the roof of Ontario, one of the things that we have been able to do in Dufferin county as part of our environment and energy program is actually have one of the largest wind farms in Dufferin county. Just west of Shelburne a huge wind farm has grown up which is now providing significant wind power to the provincial grid. We're quite proud of that initiative.

My new colleague from Dufferin-Caledon mentioned the issue of doctor shortages, and certainly that's a real issue. But I think it's worth noting that we have made a number of inroads in that area. We have opened the first new medical school in Ontario in years—in decades. But in addition to that new medical school, we've actually created satellite campuses at some of the existing schools. The closest to the member's constituency in Dufferin would be a new satellite campus of McMaster which is located in Waterloo, but that will be serving the Wellington-Dufferin area as well.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's a great pleasure to rise to congratulate and commend the member from Dufferin-Caledon on her maiden speech. I've known the member for a significant period of time. I don't want to suggest anything related to her age or mine, but I think it's certainly at least back into the early 1990s. She comes to this place probably as qualified as anyone who

has ever been elected to office. She is a rookie as an elected member, but she has served the people of the province and served that riding since—was it 1991, Sylvia, you mentioned? So when you look at that expertise, that experience, you know that she is going to do an outstanding job for the people of her riding and the people of the province of Ontario.

I've served with the predecessors she mentioned—Mr. Tilson, Mr. Eves and Mr. Tory—and I think I obviously served with whomever preceded them. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke suggests that I was around when the Magna Carta was signed, but that's not quite true. I gather it was Mavis Wilson—I was just reminded—who was here for a brief tenure, and then David Tilson joined us in 1990.

One of the things about being around in that period of time was a very significant rebuilding process for the Progressive Conservative Party after the 1990 election. Sylvia went through that process, and I think that experience is going to be very helpful in the next couple of years with her background. Looking back at those years in this place, we were then the third party. It was probably the most exciting time that I've had as a member and the fact that we built this party into a contender and actually became the government of the province of Ontario. I know that Sylvia is going to play an important role on our behalf and on behalf of her riding and the people of this great province. Congratulations.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too would like to congratulate MPP Sylvia Jones for a very interesting maiden speech. I haven't heard that many, also being a new member, but it certainly kept me interested. It helped me discover her riding of Dufferin-Caledon, which I must admit I didn't know too much about, but I feel I know a whole lot more. I also appreciate the hard work that she's put in, the time that she's put in to win her nomination and then win the election. I didn't realize that those kinds of contests for nominations happen outside the NDP. I'm happy to see that in the Conservatives you also have to run for a nomination; that your leader doesn't pick you.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No parachuting on this side either. So it's very refreshing to see that she was well qualified.

I also appreciated the importance that she puts on being available to her riding and listening to the needs of her riding. I agree with her that when we get elected, people say that you're going to represent your constituency at Queen's Park, but we also have a responsibility to represent Queen's Park in our constituency, and I'm happy to see that this is also something that we share. We also share that we sit side by side, separated by a little pathway. So congratulations on your maiden speech—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yeah, I was trying to be nice—an ideological pathway, but a physical one as well.

Anyway, congratulations on a job well done, and welcome to Queen's Park.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Dufferin–Caledon, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like to thank the members from Timmins–James Bay, Guelph, Leeds–Grenville and Nickel Belt for their kind words. I hope they are not the only kind words that are said in the coming four years. I am sure there will be opportunities for us to work together on areas of mutual concern to our constituents.

I think, in wrapping up, I'd like to go back briefly to something that was put out today, and that's the pre-budget consultation, the dissenting opposition report. I think it encapsulates very well what we in the Progressive Conservative Party see as the missing links to the throne speech and, I guess, our hopes and desires for what will be coming forward in the upcoming budget.

We talk specifically about:

- accelerating plans announced in the fall economic statement to eliminate the capital tax for all businesses immediately. If it's a good idea, let's move forward with it now and not wait. This is when businesses and manufacturing sectors in Ontario need it—now;

- reducing the corporate income tax rate to a competitive level and providing some tax relief for small businesses;

- setting and committing to real targets to reduce the regulatory burden on all businesses, and I would add a caveat to include the agricultural industry in there as well;

- providing some tax relief for hard-working Ontario families who are feeling the crunch as our manufacturing contracts;

- beginning serious consultations with Ottawa on the subject of tax reform; and

- addressing the looming energy crisis, including a responsible plan to replace dirty coal power.

And there are others that I would urge you to review and consider in your deliberations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been looking forward to this opportunity since sometime before Christmas. We got kind of pre-empted because we had a parliamentary break, and I didn't get a chance earlier. So I now get to make my comments on the throne speech. I know my good friends on both the opposition and government benches have been just standing by waiting for this.

I want to start off on a positive note. I want to say something nice. I listened to the throne speech like every other member in this House, and I read it after. I saw the media reports in regard to the throne speech. And if you listened to the government and what they were trying to say, you'd say, "Well maybe Dalton's finally trying to figure it out and kind of got it. He's said, 'We're going to have a war on poverty and we're going to do something in order to assist those people who are most in need in the province of Ontario.'"

You know what? I applaud that. I think that's a great idea. I think we don't do enough, and I truly looked

forward to seeing what the government would do. They talked about other things, but the point is, when you listen to the words spoken in that throne speech and you look at the actions, as I said earlier, where's the beef?

It's not a lot. The government got elected back in October. They had four years of mandate prior to this. Do you think that poverty is an issue that just got invented in October 2007? Everybody in this assembly knows, and everybody in this province and the media gallery knows, that poverty has been an issue, unfortunately, that's plagued all of our societies for a long time, which is really galling in a place like Ontario. We're the richest province in Canada. We're outdoing the Americans when it comes to what is happening as far as—well, as far as the American economy, let's not compare ourselves to them. They're in deep trouble. But the point is that you measure a society by the way it takes care of those most unable to defend themselves.

We look at what happens to people in poverty: It's a vicious cycle. We see it in Sudbury; we see it in Timmins; we see it in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton—everywhere. Unfortunately, there are people—sometimes it's an issue of mental health—who are not able to do well and hold a job and bring an income in and support themselves and sometimes their family. Sometimes it's issues having to do with health. Other times it's an issue that the person just is not able to get the job that they want because they don't have the educational requirement for the type of job they need in order to sustain the kind of lifestyle that they would have. Unfortunately, there are far more people in our society today who are classified as in poverty.

So what has this government done? Let me get the list. Hang on; I'm sure it's here somewhere. I'm looking. Hang on a second.

There's nothing. The government has done absolutely nothing when it comes to really dealing with poverty. If we're serious about poverty, then we should be doing some concrete things.

Let me give you a couple of quick examples. In the city of Timmins there is an organization called the Good Samaritan Inn. The Good Samaritan Inn provides a roof for people who need a place to stay short-term because they find themselves to be homeless. Being homeless in Toronto is bad enough, but imagine being homeless in Sudbury or Timmins. It's even worse in the winter months: 40 degrees below zero. People can't stay outside and sleep on a grate because frankly there ain't any grates warm enough to stay on, and quite frankly they wouldn't survive the night.

The Good Samaritan Inn has been surviving on hand-outs from individuals within our communities, out of their kind generosity and that of the corporate sector, in many cases, who have assisted them in paying some of the big bills that they've got to pay in order to keep a building like that going. They've been looking at this government and saying, "The government says there are poverty initiatives. The government says they are going to do something in order to assist those people who are

most in need in our society.” They look to the province to assist with helping them pay some of the costs that it takes to keep that Good Samaritan Inn operating. And there’s nothing there. There are no provincial programs to assist the Good Samaritan Inn. We’re working now, trying to see if we can classify the city of Timmins under the current guidelines to make that happen. But I will tell you, it’s a real uphill battle. So I say to the government across the way, all kidding aside, you could talk a good line when it comes to poverty, but when it comes to your actions, I look at what happens and I say you’re not anywhere near the mark.

I look at people on ODSP. My own sister is on ODSP; she’s schizophrenic. She and her friends are surviving on dollars that are barely enough to get by. They’re having to make the choice—many of them. My sister is lucky because my mother is still alive. My mother takes good care of Louise as far as making sure that her needs are met even though she lives in a group home, and assists in any way that she can, and so does the rest of the family. But most people don’t have that, and are having to decide, “Do I buy good food this week or do I buy macaroni and cheese? Do I make sure that I have the type of food that I need today or do I disconnect my cable and my phone?” Those are the kind of choices that they are having to make. The quality of life starts to diminish, which perpetuates the problems when it comes to the person’s own physical and mental health.

I say to the government: If you want to do something concrete, let’s be serious about ODSP rates and bring them to a level that makes some sense and allows people not to live in poverty. That’s not to say anything about people who are seniors who are having to retire early because they are unable to work for whatever reason, or having to survive on pretty meagre pensions out there, especially single women or men who are not married, living alone. It is really, really a tough go.

Je dis au gouvernement : vous avez une responsabilité de vous assurer que les plus démunis dans notre société ont la chance de participer dans le bien-être de la province de l’Ontario et de vous assurer que le monde a la chance de vivre et d’avoir une certaine dignité dans cette vie-là. Quand je regarde le gouvernement dans le discours du trône et je regarde ses actions, je vois que les deux ne se balancent pas—un dicton un peu différent sur les actions qu’on voit entre ce qu’on dit dans le discours du trône et ce qui est vraiment fait quand ça vient aux actions du gouvernement.

I appreciate that my good friend the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is here, because that’s the other thing—the government has said, “New relationship: We’re going to end what we have seen for years when it comes to how First Nations have been treated or not treated in the province of Ontario.” I heard that after the election and I thought that maybe the government was being serious, because both my leader Howard Hampton and I, New Democrats, have been coming to this Legislature over and over and over again talking about the abysmal failure of the federal government in dealing

with our First Nations and reminding the province that it has a stake, that the province pays for much of what are services in First Nations communities.

For example, health care now, after the integration of the Weeneebayko hospital in James Bay, will be entirely in provincial jurisdiction, entirely run by the province. The welfare system is run by the province; all of the policing is run by the province; the courts are run by the province. The children’s aid society service on-reserve and off-reserve is paid for by the province. Most of the services that people utilize as they do in other communities in First Nations are provincial, both funded provincially and under the legislative authority of the province of Ontario in the Legislature.

The government said, “We’re going to have a new relationship.” You know what? I applauded that. I said that it’s about time. It’s about time that the province of Ontario and the Premier stand up and say no to what has been going on for the past 100-and-some-odd years when it comes to how we treat First Nations and yes to changing the relationship. But I look at the changed relationship. Let’s look at the record since the last election. The government could have done a couple of things very quickly in order to send a really strong signal that in fact we are being serious about changing this particular relationship.

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Let’s look at the situation in KI. That reserve had Platinex, a mining exploration company, come onto its territory without their permission and do exploration, contrary to what the Supreme Court has said when it comes to the right that individuals have within First Nations as a whole to be consulted, and that the province of Ontario has a role to ensure that the mining company goes in and actually consults with the First Nations. They went to court, and at the end the court said that the government of Ontario was wrong in not ensuring that those rights were maintained and protected as per previous court decisions.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Wrong.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m interested to see that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs says I’m wrong. Go talk to Donny Morris, who’s in jail today. The government says that they want to have a new relationship with First Nations? How are you going to have a new relationship with First Nations when the action of the government is to throw the band leadership in jail?

I just say: Listen; if we’re going to have a new relationship, let’s be serious about how—there’s not a First Nation, I want to say upfront, anywhere in northern Ontario that I know of that doesn’t want a mine in its backyard, that doesn’t want to benefit from forestry, that doesn’t want to benefit from hydroelectric projects. They understand that those types of projects should be of benefit to their communities, as they are for every other community. But what they’re saying to the government and to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is that we have to ensure that there are rules when it comes to how this happens on our territory, that not only do we need to be

consulted; we also need to work in partnership with the province and make sure that these things are done in some way that benefits the communities, not just when it comes to revenue sharing but also when it comes to the whole issue of what's important to them as far as how the territory or the ground needs to be respected when it comes to aboriginal values. Instead, this government says that we have a new relationship. And what's the new relationship? We've got Donny Morris and four of his councillors in jail. I guess that's a new relationship.

I look at NAPS, Nishnawbe-Aski policing. If you look anywhere in the province of Ontario, be it the Ontario Provincial Police or local municipal police such as in the city of Toronto, Sudbury, Timmins or whatever, you have a Police Services Act that says that a police station will have such-and-such services, making sure that everything from fire suppression to smoke detection to the size of cells has to be done according to code, and that you have to have a certain amount of police officers in order to do the job of responding to the needs of the community.

Well, here we've got NAPS, Nishnawbe-Aski policing, which does policing on NAN territory, the Nishnawbe, which is all of Treaty 9 in northern Ontario. They came down here to Toronto to meet with the minister, and they said, "Listen, for 13 years we've been trying to negotiate between the federal and provincial government an agreement that ensures that we have similar police services in our communities." I'll tell you what happens now. A woman calls at 4 o'clock in the morning to report a domestic dispute in one of our communities: Either somebody doesn't answer the phone, or if they do, nobody comes. You know what's going to happen? Somebody is going to get killed. It's as simple as that.

Go talk to Ignus Gull in Attawapiskat. I just got an e-mail from him yesterday, during the weekend, talking about an incident that happened in Attawapiskat, where young vandals were vandalizing a house and the vehicle out in front of it. They called the police at 4 o'clock in the morning, but there are not enough police officers in the community—they're short-staffed—and nobody came till 11 o'clock the next day, after all the damage was done. Somebody could have been hurt. And what's the problem? Nishnawbe-Aski policing is not funded to the degree that they need to be. If you had the city of Toronto funded the way that NAPS is funded today—that would never be allowed to happen, because it would mean to say that they would not be able to do their jobs. If the people of the city of Toronto didn't see the police when they called in a reasonable amount of time, Mayor Miller and the rest of council and this Premier and the Solicitor General would have a lot to answer for.

What's the difference? Why are First Nations, when it comes to policing, treated like second-class citizens? It's not me saying this. This is Grand Chief Stan Beardy himself, who says, "We are treated as second-class citizens." If you live in the city of Timmins or Toronto and you have police services, you can be guaranteed that there's a level of service that will be provided in order to

ensure, as much as humanly possible, your safety; that if you pick up the phone and you call the police, there is a sufficient amount of officers to be dispatched; that the equipment they've got is second to none; and that they've got the support services back at the police station to assist them.

Well, here's what happens when you call from Marten Falls or you call from Kashechewan—even a better story. If you call the police from Kashechewan—first of all, they're not in a police station; they're in a trailer—there's not enough police officers. They're probably about 20% of the force, which means to say you can't cover policing 24 hours a day, which means to say, when you call, sometimes nobody answers the phone and they have to dispatch it back to Thunder Bay. And what does somebody do when—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was going to get to that. What does somebody do when they answer the phone in Thunder Bay when somebody from Kashechewan calls? God only knows. So what do they do? They call Jonathan Solomon, the chief, and they say, "Come and do something." So the chief and council have to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and try to deal with whatever has to be dealt with in their community when the police aren't there to do it. It's not that NAPS doesn't want to; it's just NAPS can't. They don't have the funding.

So they come down and they meet with the Solicitor General. They said, "Here's what we want you to do." The capital and operating requests, in order to bring our police services up to a certain standard, are \$26 million; the province of Ontario is responsible for about half of the cost. I went into that meeting fully expecting, with the new relationship, that the government would cough up its 48% of the \$26 million. What's the answer they got? Mr. Bartolucci says, "We'll work with you to convince the federal government, and if the federal government does something, then we'll kick in our money."

Excuse me; the federal government has been asleep at the switch for the last 100 years. Why would you wait on them? Being government is about leadership, so you step forward and you say, "Here's what we're prepared to do." I expected him to say, "Here's our share of the money, and let's work to make sure that the feds match." That's what we should have been doing. That would have been a signal that we could have given to First Nations to say that maybe there is a new relationship.

So I say to the government across the way and to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: In the throne speech there was some really good language. I saw the press releases. You talk about having a new relationship, but from where people sit in their communities there's nothing new about this relationship; it's a continuation of what we've had for many, many a year.

I want to turn to another issue: the issue of long-term care. All of our communities are facing the same thing. The demographics of our communities are, by and large, that there are a lot more people who are in need of long-

term care for various reasons. One, we have an aging population because we've gotten very good at health care and we've gotten very good at health promotion—look, even a guy like me is losing weight—so we're living a lot longer. I know for some of you that might be a problem, but for me it's good news. The point is that we're living longer, but when we do get ill, we get really ill and we're in need of services either in the community or, unfortunately, sometimes within long-term-care facilities. Across this province we have the same problem: We have long-term-care facilities where staff are being run off their feet in order to be able to do their job. They've been saying to this government, not just since the election but before the election, that we need to make sure that we have a standard of care that equals at least three and a half hours per resident so that we can do the jobs that need to be done to care for these people in the homes.

Like my good colleague our health critic Madame Gélinas, I go into the Extencicare, the Golden Manors, the North Centennials or the Foyer des pioniers and it's the same story: Staff are working hard, they're really trying to do what they can, but unfortunately they don't have the coverage. I was at one of the homes in Kap, I forget if it's Extencicare or North Centennial Manor, and there was one person who was working in the Alzheimer unit, and there are two separate hallways. So if she's busily working with one person who happens to be in a crisis of some type, she has no way of monitoring what's happening on the other hallway. So how are you able to make sure that people are cued to go to the bathroom? That's what you do with Alzheimer patients in the early stages. You don't have to put incontinence products on them. You cue them to go to the washroom. But if you don't have the staffing to do that—yeah, Minister Smitherman tried to make fun of it, but that's where we end up. So I say to the government: You talk a really great line when it comes to what you need to do in the throne speech, but when it comes to action, I don't see this government moving on the 3.5 hours.

The other issue is the number of beds we have in long-term-care facilities. Where I come from, we have the Timmins and District Hospital. About 60% of the people in our hospital are alternate-level-of-care patients—ALCs, as we call them in the jargon. That means to say, these are people who ended up in the hospital in crisis, should be in a long-term-care bed, but we don't have the long-term-care bed to put them in. So what do we do with them? We keep them in the hospital and we call them ALCs. But 60% of our hospital is filled with ALC patients. What does that mean? It means that when you bring your child to the hospital because they broke their arm, you have to wait longer at the emergency because there is no place to deal with them. We're taking patients and putting them in beds and cots in the emergency department of the Timmins and District Hospital.

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I've been in the hospital a number of times. Unfortunately, my mother-in-law has not been very well as of

the past couple of months, and I've had to go to the hospital quite a bit. Plus, I get all the constituents calling the office and wanting to meet with me on this issue. We're trying to implore the Minister of Health to make sure that we are able to build beds within the city of Timmins so that we can properly take people out of ALC beds and move them over to long-term-care beds and long-term-care facilities. It makes sense financially but, more importantly, it makes sense for the patients, the residents who have to live in those places.

I say to the government—and I'll just wrap up on this—that, as I said in the beginning, if you listen to the speech, it's a good one. Boy, you guys can talk a good line. But when it comes to measuring up what this government has done and what it intends to do on the issues that you outlined in the throne speech, I don't see a lot different than what we saw before. I see First Nations that have been told they're going to get a new relationship, and they see the relationship staying the same. We see poverty in this province not being dealt with seriously. Yes, we've got a minister responsible for poverty, and we have, apparently, a war on poverty. But all I know is, when I talk to people in our communities, they don't see the difference when it comes to the day-to-day parts of their lives. When I look at long-term care and I look at the services that people need in our communities to make sure that they're able to live in independence and if, God forbid, they've got to go into a long-term care bed, it's there for them, not much has changed.

I say to this government: If you really believe in what you say in your throne speech, you should be bringing legislation that deals with this stuff concretely and ensure for us that in fact you're going to do what you said you did. Up to this point, I don't see that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm just going to respond to the part of the member's remarks with respect to aboriginal affairs. The member says he doesn't see any change in the relationship. I'm wondering where the member has been for the last few months. I'm wondering if the member is aware of the fact that this government entered into a 25-year, \$3-billion agreement to agree on First Nations' and this government's management and sharing of revenues. It meant \$200 million going into the bank accounts of First Nations across this province a month ago. It was an agreement that the NDP government never entered into. In fact, they botched it up so much that we had litigation in February of this year that had to be forestalled as a result of this agreement.

Did the NDP government resolve the Ipperwash land claim to avoid the 1995 confrontation? Remember that summer of 1995 confrontation between the Harris government and people who were protesting for their rights on Ipperwash park? That happened right at the heels of the failure of the NDP government to do anything about that land claim.

What did this government do within, oh, I think it was six weeks of us taking office for this term? We in fact

said to Chief Bressette, “You, if you wish, jointly manage the park”—Chief Bressette said, “That’s exactly what I want to do”—“at the end of which you get title to the park.” Boom, solved; six weeks. That’s the new relationship: Ipperwash park now going back to its rightful First Nation.

Did this opposition lift a finger to contribute to the solution of what was happening in KI and Ardoch? Did they do anything to offer a solution? Did they go to the community to try and offer a solution? No, they didn’t. All they did was dump on the government’s efforts to try and find a solution. That’s not leadership at all, but it won’t deter this government from continuing to build on its improved relationship with First Nations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back. I wanted to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay for his spirited comments. That’s one thing we can always count on from him: bringing the perspective from his constituency to this chamber.

I want to pick up on something he mentioned, which appears to be a province-wide crisis in long-term care. We remember, as our new colleague from Nickel Belt pointed out, that the Liberals had told us they were going to revolutionize health care back in 2003. Then what did they do? They placed a little bit of bureaucracy in the way of hospitals. We have now got a crisis in my own city, the city of Ottawa, where there is bed blocking going on; surgeries are being cancelled and we are short approximately 250 long-term-care beds.

There has been no acknowledgment by this government that there needs to be more private investment into the public delivery of health care so that we can actually free up those beds. There has been no acknowledgment by this government that we must assist seniors in staying in their homes longer, whether that’s through additional recreational facilities or whether or not it’s through other programming they can take advantage of. It’s working with our veterans to ensure that those people who fought for our freedom so that we have the ability to stand in this chamber are given the respect they need to stay in their homes that much longer.

As I end on this note, I again want to congratulate my colleague. It’s wonderful to see him back here in the 39th Parliament. I look forward to discussing other matters of great importance that are shared among many of us here in this chamber throughout our various ridings. Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to congratulate my colleague Gilles Bisson for his comments on the throne speech. Certainly some of the key issues that he talked about are issues that I may be talking about also, with maybe more of a focus as to what it means in my riding. But at the core of what he was talking about was really the lack of action. A throne speech is just that: words. Words don’t put food on the table for the poor; words don’t put a roof over your head if you’re homeless;

words don’t help you get a job if you are unemployed. They are just that.

We need leadership. We need a government that goes from words to action. He has clearly demonstrated that the government we have in place right now is heavy on words, very light on action. That doesn’t help the people of Ontario. The examples that MPP Mr. Bisson has brought forward are all examples from his riding that would apply just as well in my riding. Thank you for bringing this forward.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance to stand up, speak and comment on the speech of my friend the member from Timmins–James Bay.

I was listening to him, and it seems like he didn’t read the throne speech very well. He commented on a small part of it. We are lucky the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs answered and explained it to him. Hopefully, this issue has been clarified for him. We have a good relationship with aboriginals in this province of Ontario, and a good indication is that we have a minister in charge of that area in order to patch up and open a new era in the relationship with the aboriginal people in the province of Ontario.

Also, he didn’t talk much about our commitment to education. He didn’t talk much about our commitment to health care. He didn’t talk much about our commitment to attract new jobs to the province of Ontario. Our government—

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I’m going to have a good chance, hopefully at the end of this day, to speak for more than 10 minutes in support of the throne speech. I will talk in detail about what’s in the throne speech and why we are proud of it as a government, because this throne speech and this government action in the province of Ontario create a lot of jobs. I will give a lot of examples when I get the chance to speak in more detail about the throne speech.

The opposition always brings negative points to the throne speech and to our government action. Thank God, anyway, that we don’t have the Conservatives in power; otherwise, we would privatize the whole of health care, as the member from Ottawa was saying a few minutes ago. At least we have a little bit of a difference with the NDP, but still we share our agreement on public health care and public education. Despite the little differences between us and them, we are realistic. We have a realistic approach to issues. We’re trying to work it out in order to have a good province and a successful and prosperous province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would just say to my good friend, yeah, you have a commitment when it comes to public health care: It’s called private hospitals. We now finance the construction of hospitals with private dollars, and they’re costing way more money than it would cost to do it under the public sector. So I ain’t going to take a

lecture on what is public and what is private from my good friend.

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I just want to say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I thought it was really kind of interesting that he basically tried to blame the win tax issue, which is the revenue sharing on Casino Rama, on the former NDP government. I thought that's really interesting, that's pretty rich, because we had committed that they get 100% of the funding. That was the deal. They get one casino, we get to build Windsor; we get to build Niagara Falls and they get Rama at 100%. It was the former Conservative government who put in the win tax, and this government dragged its heels for over four years, couldn't get to an agreement and finally was embarrassed into a position by the First Nations. My hat's off to the leadership of the First Nations communities, who browbeat this government into finally doing something that was a bit of a saw-off on what the 100% should have been and where they ended up.

Then the best one: It's the NDP's fault that Ipperwash—that they called the police. I'm not going to get into this because my good friends to the right of me are going to get a bit upset, but that is really above and beyond the pale, for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs of Ontario to stand up in this House and to blame the NDP for having caused the situation in Ipperwash. Man, are you off the mark on that one—100%. It tells me two things. One is, the government has got an indefensible record when it comes to this new relationship with First Nations, and the second is, he's either flying off the cuff, or he's got pretty bad people working on his political staff briefing him as to what the realities are on the files that he's responsible for at aboriginal affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I will be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I am honoured to rise today as the member for York South–Weston. I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the people of our riding for their support in the October general election, and I want to thank all of the volunteers who worked very hard during the election campaign. Their active participation strengthens our communities and safeguards democracy. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my predecessors, Joe Cordiano and Paul Ferreira. I wish them well in their endeavours.

I am looking forward to working with all of my colleagues, and I am honoured to serve this House as a member of the Liberal caucus. The election of Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government in 2003 ushered in an era of positive change for our province. Last October, the people of our province gave this government a very clear and strong second mandate, and I want to assure the House that our government intends to keep Ontario moving forward by building on the accomplishments of our first term, guided by our vision of inclusion, fairness and co-operation.

Because I have undertaken the duty to serve the people of York South–Weston here in the Legislature of Ontario, let me share with you what the people in the many communities in this culturally diverse riding have told me they want this Legislature to know. In general terms, my constituents want us to think about their concerns and aspirations in equal measure. They want us to administer our collective resources to the best advantage for all and make sure no one is left behind. More specifically, they want to be able to work and provide for their families. They want an efficient and affordable public transportation system.

Again and again, people tell me how important it is to them that their children stay in school and have a chance at a better life, and so they ask that we in the Legislature help by properly funding and efficiently running our schools. They want more recreational and skilled training programs for the youth. They want us to create partnership with trades and the business sector.

They want to feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods. They want a healthier system that is efficiently run and properly funded, timely in its delivery of services and accessible to all. My constituents want our seniors to live out their lives with dignity by having access to services both in and out of the home.

The riding of York South–Weston is rich in cultural and linguistic diversity. We are a veritable mini-United Nations, and I know that our diversity is our greatest strength.

Yet York South–Weston has its share of challenges. Our riding has been affected by the migration of manufacturing jobs to the GTA and beyond due to the changing dynamics of global markets and the emergence of new technologies. That means that many residents continue to lag behind the economic growth and prosperity enjoyed by many Ontario communities. Small businesses are in need of revitalization. Many in our workforce are in need of retraining and must have access to these kinds of opportunities if they are to continue to be productive and self-sustaining citizens in the future. I know that, together, we can transform these challenges into real opportunities for growth.

My riding is home for many newcomers who want a fair chance so they may succeed, and they can succeed when they have access to adequate settlement programs, language training and child care, when their foreign trade and academic credentials are quickly and fairly recognized.

Our government's throne speech reflects our government's approach to governance and demonstrates that we are listening to the concerns of the people who live in ridings such as York South–Weston. Our Premier's vision is to lead our great province forward and to do it the Ontario way: by bringing people together, not ripping them apart with divisive politics but making this province stronger by uniting us in our common purpose.

Because we know how important strong families are to a vibrant society, we're investing in family literacy centres and expanding the successful Pathways to Edu-

cation program, which has already helped many more students graduate from high school. Our government is working towards implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. This will help young families and give our children a head start in school.

Because this government knows that we don't inherit the earth but, in fact, borrow it from our children and grandchildren, we're working hard to tackle the greatest threat to our environment: climate change. We know that by encouraging the development of green technologies we can help safeguard our ecology and create new jobs, which will continue to grow in numbers as we move forward into the third millennium.

Because we know that a healthy population is both happy and productive, we're making sure 500,000 more Ontarians will have a family doctor. We're tackling wait times in our emergency rooms, and we're making real progress; we're helping seniors who want to stay in their homes by broadening home care services; we are going to provide a caregivers' grant to those caring for elderly parents; and we are working on improving the level of care in long-term-care homes.

My mother, Maria Albanese, who is 78 years old, is in the House, and I would like to acknowledge her presence here today and thank her publicly for all that she has done for our family over the years. I believe it's important that all our seniors know that this government is committed to their happiness and well-being, especially as they approach their sunset years.

Because we want to ensure that all Ontarians have a fair chance at success, we are also helping our lowest-income families by building on the Ontario child benefit. We are adding a new dental program which will help those in need, and we have struck a cabinet committee in charge of developing a poverty reduction strategy.

Because York South–Weston needs our public transit system to be effectively connected to other parts of the city, because we need increased access to job opportunities, to local businesses, and because we need to reduce the burden on the environment, I was very encouraged by our government's release of the Move Ontario 2020 transit plan last August.

Three projects in particular—the Eglinton LRT, the Jane Street light rail proposal and the Crosstown rail line connecting Weston Road to the Don Valley Parkway—are examples of transit initiatives that will help build and strengthen our community.

One transit issue has been the cause for significant community concern in our riding, and that is the air-rail link from Pearson airport to downtown Toronto. The original air-rail proposal was flawed; it called for the annexing of Weston, essentially closing streets that connect the very heart of the community. The proposal would have meant that a high-speed train would have ripped through the neighbourhood, tearing it apart at the seams, isolating small businesses. What's more, no stop was planned in the community. Such a proposal was asking too much of our community and would have been a hard sell for any politician.

The way I see it, if a train has to come through the Georgetown corridor it should stop in the community, and if the train stops in Weston it has to slow down, just as the GO train does now. That means that our streets will not have to be closed. Fortunately, the Ministry of Transportation indicated that if the air-rail link project selects this route, its preference is to have the train stop in the community, providing additional service to local residents and keeping Weston village intact.

I entered public service because I believe democracy requires active participation, and I know that the results of political action or inaction have a great impact on the lives of everyday people. I was born in a bustling seaside town in southern Italy called Taranto. My parents moved back and forth between Italy and Canada many, many times. As a young child, I remember having to adapt over and over again to new environments, different languages, different schools. Most importantly, I had to leave old friends and make new ones. So you see, I understand perfectly well what new immigrants feel when they find themselves in a new place, having to learn a new language and having to make new friends.

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Twenty-nine years ago, my husband, Germinio Pio Politi, whose presence here today I would like to acknowledge, and I came to Toronto to live here permanently. Our first apartment was in York South–Weston. We have stayed in the area ever since, raising our two children, Alexander and Charissa, in this multicultural community of communities. For 22 years I worked as newscaster and associate producer at CFMT, now OMNI television, Canada's first multicultural television station. I must say, along the way I sure made a lot of friends. Decades of successfully overcoming significant challenges in partnership with my colleagues and friends have confirmed for me what I have always known in my heart: That when we work together towards a common goal, everything is possible. I know that with courage, ingenuity and leadership, we can transform the greatest challenges into real opportunities.

In closing, I want to say that I am proud of our Premier's leadership and I endorse this government's vision for Ontario, a vision which fosters a strong and united society, a caring and compassionate society, a society in which hope wins over despair, co-operation wins over conflict and solutions are more important than partisan confrontations.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As I rise for my inaugural speech to comment on the throne speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I would like to say it's an honour to be sharing my time with my new colleague the member for York South–Weston and to be surrounded by my friends from the McGuinty team.

The speech from the throne, Moving Forward the Ontario Way, lays out an ambitious plan for a healthier, greener, stronger Ontario, where there is opportunity for all. It provides a way forward for the people of my beautiful, vibrant new riding, whom I am privileged to represent.

Oak Ridges–Markham is home to people who have come to Ontario from every corner of the globe. One of the fastest-growing areas of the country, it is the largest constituency by population in Canada. It comprises parts of four former ridings previously represented by four current esteemed members of this House: the member for Markham–Unionville, the Honourable Michael Chan; the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees; the member for York–Simcoe, Julia Munro; and the member for Vaughan, Greg Sorbara. Putting aside any partisan differences, at least for today, I know they have worked long and hard, each in his or her own way, to bring about positive change for their constituents and all Ontarians.

So what is my riding really like? I love to travel around my riding. I think of it as a microcosm of Ontario. We have a little bit of the best of all our province has to offer. From the farms, villages and towns of King and Whitchurch–Stouffville to the bustling suburbs, new urban developments and high-tech industries of Richmond Hill and Markham, we have it all. Our defining physical feature is the Oak Ridges moraine, with steep, forested ridges studded with granite boulders left by the glaciers, interspersed with deep kettle lakes and wetlands. Known as the rain barrel of southern Ontario, the moraine provides drinking water to over a quarter of a million people through wells. As it is also the headwaters of the rivers and streams that flow into both Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe, it is the source of drinking water to millions. It is imperative that we ensure the purity of these waters, and I know that our government has committed to doing just that through the Clean Water Act and the Greenbelt Protection Act, passed in the last mandate, and, through our intention, as expressed in the throne speech, to introduce tough new legislation in this Parliament to protect Lake Simcoe and to ban toxic chemicals and the cosmetic use of pesticides.

In fact, it was the critical importance of clean drinking water that first led me to seek elected office. The tragedy of Walkerton, where people became sick and died because they drank polluted water, was an outrage in our province. The basic principles of public health were ignored, and I became convinced that we needed a strong, new government dedicated to keeping our community safe, and that I wanted to contribute all my knowledge and experience to that government.

People often ask me why I, a physician and long-time health administrator, would want to become a member of provincial Parliament. My answer is that I believe I can help people solve their problems. As a family doctor, I tried to assist my patients with their health issues on an individual basis. As the commissioner of health services and medical officer of health for York region, I was responsible to the regional council for the health of the community as a whole and for delivering essential public services. Now I intend to support my constituents in the same way as I did as a family doctor and as a medical officer of health—by listening to their concerns and advocating on their behalf.

Through the years, the touching and abiding faith of my family, friends and colleagues has encouraged me to

seek and obtain what I believe to be this very honourable duty—to represent my fellow citizens here, to engage in debate and, through our collective wisdom, to improve the quality of life of our constituents.

But how to do that? Well, the throne speech gives us the road map. In Oak Ridges–Markham, one of our most pressing needs is to improve our transportation networks. This government's Move Ontario 2020 plan will expand public transit dramatically into my riding. With the planned extension of the subway to Richmond Hill, the GO train to the Aurora Road in Whitchurch–Stouffville and the transit terminal in Cornell in Markham, we will allow people to get home sooner so that families have more time together when the work day is done.

We also know we have more work to do to improve health care. One paramount requirement is to tackle wait times in our emergency rooms. The Markham Stouffville Hospital needs expansion of acute care, mental health, diagnostic and emergency room services—and this I am committed to ensuring.

Our seniors have contributed throughout their lives to our great province, and now it is our turn to ensure they age at home for as long as possible in dignity and comfort through expanded home care and grants to their family caregivers, as required.

As a public health physician, I'm particularly proud of our recent introduction of legislation to make healthy eating a reality in school cafeterias, and the creation of the Ontario fitness challenge program to fight childhood obesity. In my own riding, with so many new, ambitious Ontarians, a system of public education is seen as the key to their own and their children's success. Our new textbook and technology grant for university and college students will help them get started each year.

We will strengthen the economy by keeping taxes competitive and investing in the education and skills of Ontarians while fostering relationships with businesses and labour to create more well-paying positions of employment. And we will be doing this in a fiscally responsible way that allows labour markets to adjust.

Many people assume that my riding is extremely affluent, and based on average income that may be true. However, an average can be misleading as it does not show the range of incomes from which it is calculated. There is definitely poverty in my riding, as I saw first-hand going door to door last summer and fall. By building on the Ontario child benefit with a new dental program to help those who need it most and by developing a poverty reduction strategy, we will ensure that all the residents of Oak Ridges–Markham have more opportunities to succeed.

Since the election, I have had the good fortune to attend many events in my riding. Each one has taught me new things about the people in my community, including how many wonderful volunteers are contributing to the richness of our lives in Oak Ridges–Markham. One memorable event was the opening of the Little Rouge Public School in Markham. The excitement of the kids and their families, the teachers and staff was obvious as I

came through the doors. The auditorium was packed with people from all over the world. You could hear a pin drop while the children performed songs from their countries of origin as well as European classical music. These kids told us of their hopes and dreams through verse and affirmation of why character matters.

The local councillor, a third-generation Canadian, described to us how this corner of Markham looked when he was a boy, playing in the creek with his friends. As the town of Markham's motto states, we remembered our roots while looking forward to the future. We shared in one of the loudest and most heartfelt renditions of *O Canada* I have ever heard. These are the people it is my honour and privilege to serve.

We look forward to our government's assistance in continuing to flourish and move ahead as a community. I am positive my fellow members would agree that this is why each of us wanted to become part of this House, be it in this election or years past, as in our heart of hearts we want to assist, to serve and better the plight of others.

As a new immigrant to Canada, I heard the words of Pierre Elliott Trudeau that Canada must be a just society, that we must have equal opportunity for all. These principles will be my guide during my time in this Legislature. The McGuinty government has made considerable progress over the last four years, but we have more to do, as is so well laid out in the throne speech. I am proud to be here so we can move Ontario forward together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the members from York South–Weston and Oak Ridges–Markham on their comments on the throne speech. I'd also like to congratulate them on their election wins, and I wish them well in the Ontario provincial Legislature.

There are a couple of things I wanted to comment on, though. The one was from the member from York South–Weston, her comments about what she considers to be the success of more people in Ontario getting a family doctor. I can tell you that I don't buy into that for one second. In fact, I'm finding in my riding—and I've talked to a lot of people from different parts of the province—that this is an epidemic that's much worse than we first thought. Yes, there are new doctors being trained and they're graduating, but the problem is that we're not catching up to the ones who are retiring. I can tell you, in almost every community, when you talk to constituents or to individuals in that community, it's a question that, as I go out in the riding on community events, I'm finding I am asked far more than I have ever been asked in the past, and that's: "How do I get a family doctor?"

If there are 500,000 more people or whatever it is that they are talking about who are seeing a family doctor, then it's not happening in central Ontario. All of our communities have very strong physician recruitment committees, and we're not seeing anything being let up on that. I want to point out that the government talks a

big story as far as saying that the family physician recruitment is working, but it's not working in central Ontario, and I can tell you that for sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm having a bit of a fight with my chair here.

I want to congratulate both the members for what are their maiden speeches. I want to congratulate them first of all on their election to this Legislature. This is a pretty elite club that we have here, as sometimes we refer to it. A lot of people have tried unsuccessfully over the years to come and represent their constituency here in the Legislature. A few of us every now and then get an opportunity to be lucky enough to be elected. Some of us here are even luckier to get re-elected after we've been here for a while, and that's really the test.

I just say to the members: I know you come here with all the right intention of doing what needs to be done, but at the end—and I don't mean this to try to take a knock at you, because it is your maiden speech. A lot of what was said in the throne speech, I can understand, warms the heart when it comes to somebody who believes in some of the issues that have been talked about. But the real test is going to be on the measure of it that we're able to deliver. This is where the two members who spoke previously could be of assistance in making sure that, not just at caucus meetings and discussions that we're having amongst ourselves privately but also publicly, when need be, they say, "Hey, maybe we haven't done enough to challenge this Legislature and to challenge the government to do what is right."

Yes, we all got elected on the label. I got elected as a New Democrat, the two previous members who spoke got elected as Liberals, and we represent our political parties. I understand that. But at the end of the day, we're here to represent the people. Sometimes we need to rise beyond just the partisan politics that our parties sometimes bring.

If I can give you two things in your maiden speeches, I would say, "Well done." I thought you brought an eloquent voice to what you had to say about your constituencies. I congratulate you for bringing your families, because far too often that's the big sacrifice we make around here. I look forward to working with you on these files over the next number of years.

Mr. Mike Colle: I also would like to offer my congratulations to our two new members who gave their maiden speeches: the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and the member from York South–Weston. I think the people of those two ridings and the people of Ontario are very fortunate that accomplished, professional women like the two members offered to sacrifice a lot of family time to run and represent their ridings. I know the member for York South–Weston had a distinguished career as a professional broadcaster for many, many years—very well known, very compassionate, very knowledgeable, with an outstanding community reputation. The member from Oak Ridges–Markham was a family physician, the medical officer of health for York region. Again, both have proven professional standards and contributions they'd been making in their commu-

ities for years before they came here. I think it really bodes well for the future of this Legislature that people of that calibre have chosen to run and represent the people of those two ridings, and I think they'll do a terrific job, given that they already have a proven record of community contribution.

That's why I think both of them will stand up and be very clear for their constituents when they say, "Why should an unemployed Ontarian not be eligible for federal EI benefits?" Over 70% of the people out of work in their two ridings cannot get federal EI and can't get the federal training programs, and then, to boot, the people in their ridings are paying more taxes to the federal government so they can have lower taxes and equalization clawbacks they give out of Ontario's money to the other provinces so the other provinces can have lower tuition for their students, lower property taxes, more services. Meanwhile, our unemployed workers can't even get EI, as the federal government keeps clawing money out of Ontario, at our expense, to help everybody else. What about our people?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to also rise to congratulate the members from York South–Weston and Oak Ridges–Markham. It's great to see your involvement. It's great to see your interest in bringing forward the issues that are important to your constituents. I hope that your voice is heard at the meetings and that you are able to bring forward many of the ideas that you raised in your speeches.

I'm particularly interested in—both of you mentioned the need for emergency room improvements. Of course, it is also something that I raised in my speech, because we do see what happens when people don't have family physicians. They are obligated, because they have no other options, to go to emergency rooms, and that does need to be solved, so good luck in your fight in bringing that forward.

The other issue that you both raised was the Move Ontario 2020 plan—again, a great idea in concept. It's unfortunate that we're having to wait 12 years for implementation. The concept is a good one, and it would be nice if it was moving forward faster, so I wish you well in encouraging your party to do that.

The member from York South–Weston: I give you a lot of credit for actually stating your mother's age. I hope she forgives you in the next week.

Congratulations. I look forward to working with you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: On behalf of my colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and myself, I want to thank all of the members who commented on our inaugural speeches, particularly the members from Simcoe North, Timmins–James Bay, Eglinton–Lawrence and Dufferin–Caledon—I'm still learning all of them.

I'm very proud to be here. Again, I want to thank my family, and I want to thank all of my constituents. I look forward to working very hard on their behalf, and I look forward to working with all the colleagues in the House, especially the ones who are part of our party, in order to

bring forward the voices of the constituents of our respective ridings and to be able to advocate on their behalf. I want to thank all the other members for commenting. I didn't agree with some of the comments that they made; I find some of them too negative. I think that most Ontarians have proven that they believe this government will continue to move the province ahead with the initiatives that were first announced in the speech from the throne on November 29 and reiterated by the Premier here today.

I must say that in the time since we last gathered here in the House in December, I have taken—as all of us have, I believe—the opportunity to be out talking to the people in my riding. The people of York South–Weston are already looking forward to the five-point plan for a more prosperous Ontario that our government presented in the throne speech, and we will all work hard to see that that will be delivered. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

1700

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise to take part in the throne speech debate today. I have to tell you that this time was originally allocated to Peter Shurman, but I'm sure a lot of people realize that Peter lost his mother last week and won't be in the House this week. I'm stepping in at the last minute to try to help out our caucus.

I did want to congratulate a lot of the new members today who have spoken. I know Ms. Jones from Dufferin–Caledon and the two recent speakers who've just spoken in the last couple of minutes. It's interesting to be in this House when you're a new member because it's the first couple of speeches when nice things happen to you; you are congratulated all the time. That won't likely happen again in the next four years. But I do congratulate all the new members. I believe there are 11 new members in the Legislature this year. I congratulate them all on their elections. Hopefully, we can all work together and make Ontario a better place to live.

I had a couple of congratulations that I wanted to say today. I mentioned in one of the statements earlier that the sport of curling is a huge sport in north Simcoe and in Simcoe county. We have been very blessed to have four great curling clubs in the area—the Ontario champions, both men's and women's this year, in Glenn Howard's team and Sherry Middaugh's team. I didn't get a lot of time to say this in the statement earlier, but these are incredible people who work in the community that supports the sport of curling. It's always such a positive group of people to be around. Not only are these the best curlers in the world and they compete on a world-class level at any given time, but they are just the greatest people to be around with fundraising events that they have throughout the year and how they help our hospitals and our fundraising campaigns.

I did mention earlier, and I will say it again, that Curl for the Cure is a fundraiser for breast cancer research. It was held a couple of weeks back in the Coldwater Recreation Centre. This group of people, on four ice

surfaces, raised \$25,000 in one day. Also, as I mentioned earlier, there's the Curl with the Pros program, where Glenn Howard's team and Sherry Middaugh's team and Wayne Middaugh's team, a group of people from across the province, came together to help the hospital foundations and their fundraiser, and they raised \$16,000.

One other thing I wanted to say on a very, very positive note is to congratulate this group of people. Up in the township of Tiny, in the village of Wyevale we have a couple of gentlemen: Kirk Hastings and David Price, both guys in their mid-30s. They represented Ontario for the first time at an event in Labrador called Cain's Quest. A lot of people have probably never heard of this, but this is a race across Labrador. Each team of two people have two snowmobiles, there are 29 teams entered, and they go 2,000 miles across Labrador with no trails. Their only way to function is with GPS. This team from Wyevale, Kirk Hastings and David Price, finished the race. Both snowmobiles have to cross the finish line, and with 50 kilometres to go, one machine broke down completely and they had to get a sleigh to load it on and to drag it across the finish line so they could compete. But the whole community is pretty proud of these guys. It's an endurance race, and these are pretty tough guys and they did a great job for Ontario. Again, it's the first team that we've ever had from Ontario that's entered this race.

One of the things that I wanted to comment on today with the throne speech—and it's a long throne speech so there are a lot of things we can actually discuss, but I can tell you that throughout this whole winter we've had a lot of bickering back and forth between the federal government and the provincial government. Nothing really ever changes. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you can recall when the Progressive Conservative Party formed the government in Ontario and there was a Liberal government in Ottawa. The same types of concerns were raised all the time. The chief whip of the opposition raised it earlier that no one was listening to Ontario over the employment insurance benefits. That's not a new story. That goes back 8, 10, 12 years for sure, and we just keep re-hashing that. It's a problem when you get an opportunity to blame a higher level of government or finger-point or whatever it may be. But we can look at the federal government—and I wanted to put this on the record today, and if I'm wrong, maybe someone can correct me. There are a number of things I thought we should talk about because the throne speech, on page 12, does refer to the federal government on a couple of occasions.

I want to make clear one particular area, the 1,000 cops program, because I'm critic for community safety. It's my understanding that two years ago Prime Minister Harper promised 2,500 new police officers for the country. Hopefully, some of those police officers will end up in First Nations policing. Because there's no question—the member from Timmins—James Bay mentioned it much earlier in his comments—that there is a real crisis around First Nations policing and we absolutely have to resolve that. So here's one area where some of those police officers can be used.

But it's my understanding that the federal government, as a result of their budget approval, and apparently the budget has been passed, is transferring \$156 million to the province of Ontario to spend as they wish over the next five years. If the provincial government will match funds with that, they could easily do 1,000 police officers over the next five years. That would also allocate 500 police officers towards the OPP as well. I think that any of us involved in the policing community all understand that the OPP have the statistics to back that they actually require another 400 to 500 police officers. So the 1,000 police officers that are coming from the federal government is a really good kick-start program for Ontario.

It's also my understanding that the government of Ontario has to make some kind of a public announcement by March 31, I believe, of this year that they will either buy into the program or they won't. So we'll be looking carefully in the budget next week and also to comments by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services as they move in that direction. I hope that we can build on that. As well, it's my understanding in talking to my federal counterpart and some of his colleagues—and I've met them on a number of occasions—that that would be open for review after five years. So after five years they may be able to renegotiate that and make it more sustainable into the future or maybe the province and the federal government wouldn't be able to agree on that.

1710

I heard a couple of times today in question period about how the province of Ontario has a \$60-billion infrastructure program. I'm assuming that's hospitals, schools, roads, sewers, water—whatever it may be. But I also know that for the last five months there's been an offer—this dates back to the budget of 2007 by the federal government—a \$3.1-billion offer for infrastructure for Ontario over a period of seven years. So that's \$3.1 billion over seven years. If you take the \$3.1 billion and multiply it by three—of course the provincial share being \$3.1 billion and the municipal share being \$3.1 billion because most of the COIP numbers work on that formula—that would be a \$9.3-billion investment in infrastructure as a result of the Building Canada program that we have apparently on the table; I'm told it's been under negotiation for close to five months. Although it isn't mentioned in the throne speech, as we use the throne speech as a basis for the budget which will be announced next Tuesday, surely the province of Ontario will sign on to that Building Canada program and actually get \$9.3 billion over seven years. That would make a great start to a lot of municipal infrastructure programs, and we wouldn't have to keep reannouncing things. We'd just have X number of dollars per year, totalling \$9.3 billion at the end of seven years.

That question was asked at the ROMA program. One of the mayors in my municipality actually asked that question to Minister Caplan. Quite frankly, the minister was not very polite at ROMA in how he responded to the question. He was blaming it completely on the feds.

Whoever's fault it is, we absolutely have to get that. There's no reason we can't proceed with that. We have to get negotiating quicker. Whether it's a federal problem or a provincial problem, there is \$9.3 billion in infrastructure at stake with that one program alone.

The other thing that's been announced by the federal government is the Community Development Trust, and that's \$1 billion from Canada for communities that have had hardships due to the loss of manufacturing jobs. My understanding on that as well is that the total for Ontario should be \$357 million, and it's my understanding also that the \$357 million has to be announced by the province of Ontario. I'm sure that if we listen to the loss of manufacturing jobs and how many communities have actually lost manufacturing jobs, I think you'll find that almost any one of our ridings would be happy to receive some of that \$357 million. My understanding is that it is to be announced by the end of March as well.

I'm thinking of communities like Windsor and Hamilton. We heard the numbers earlier today, but a lot of manufacturing jobs have been lost. I've had the closure of the Huronia Regional Centre in my riding—the Southwestern Regional Centre. These are government jobs that have been lost, but at the same time they're having an economic impact on the communities. So we definitely have to tap into that as well.

I'm hoping that this \$357 million will be announced—I'm told it has to be announced by the end of March for communities to be successful in that, and I look forward to that in the budget as well.

The COMRIF program was started by the current government in the last Parliament. The federal government has a \$65-million top-up program to that. That means they would call for another \$65 million from the Ontario government. So far, it's my understanding that the Ontario government has not signed on to that. So there's another \$65 million from the federal side, \$65 million from the provincial side and \$65 million from the municipalities. That would account to almost \$200 million in additional infrastructure that could proceed, but I'm told that the provincial government has not signed on to that, so now the federal government is actually moving ahead and making announcements on their share of that. I know that the town of Penetanguishene in my community just signed on for \$1.3 million on the Robert Street water treatment plant, but there's no way we can bring the provincial government to the table to match that share.

Another thing that the member from Oak Ridges—Markham mentioned in her comments was the importance of Lake Simcoe to herself. It's something that is very dear to me. I have 100 kilometres of Lake Simcoe shoreline in my riding. If there's one thing I want, it's for the water in Lake Simcoe to be clean. I have to give the federal government credit. They've put forward \$12 million over two years initially, in last year's budget, and now this year, they've just recently allocated another \$18 million over four years. So there's \$30 million of federal money at stake for projects around Lake Simcoe, but all we have so far from the province is a strategy around a Lake Simcoe Protection Act. In the budget next week,

I'm hoping the minister will come forward with matching funds for the \$30 million that the federal government has put forward under their national water strategy for projects around Lake Simcoe. I think that would be working together in a spirit of co-operation. I think there's no question that all of us in this House would want to make sure that Lake Simcoe was kept clean and enhanced as we move forward over the next few years.

The labour market agreement: I know that people are talking about training, colleges and universities. Effective April 1 of this year, there will be another \$311 million forwarded to the province of Ontario from the federal government for training, colleges and universities. I think we're all excited about that, because the labour market agreement was a long time coming. Now we've got this money that's coming, and we're hoping it'll help colleges, we're hoping it's going to help universities, and of course I really hope it's going to help the training aspect, with more apprentices, etc.

We have a big ratio problem that's going around in the apprenticeship programs, and a lot of the small business organizations are really trying to move forward with that. The reality is this: If you've got an electrician apprenticeship and you've got one employee—you're the journeyman electrician in your company—you can have one apprentice. If you want a second apprentice, you have to have an additional four journeymen. It's complete idiocy. It's a big mistake, and it has to be changed to at least one-on-one. Other provinces are just the opposite: For the second journeyman, you can have three apprentices. I think the government party is really tied into the construction unions and what they're requiring and what they're asking for and they're afraid to move on this. The reality is it's not good for small business people wanting to take on two and three apprentices if they would like to do so. At least bring it back to sanity and have a ratio of one-to-one.

Boy, the time's going quickly here.

The other thing I noticed, in the school section of the throne speech—"Ontarians sent a clear message this past fall: They want our children to come together, learn together and grow together." Can anyone explain to me why this government is going to allow this Afrocentric school to proceed in the Toronto District School Board? I've heard nothing good about it. You say right in your throne speech that you're against segregation, but the reality is you have a segregation issue.

On schools, Mr. Speaker, we've got a very, very serious problem. I'm sure some of the school bus operators in your riding have met with you. They're meeting with all of our ridings, at least. I've met with the Ontario school bus operators' association a couple of times. The price of gasoline is really hurting them badly. They can't pay. There's not nearly enough money flowing to the school boards for the school buses. I'm told that there will be very few new school buses purchased this year because there's just no money to purchase them, so we're going to have a lower level of school buses out there. The people who drive our school buses are some of the poorest-paid people in our society,

and they move, as you know, about 800,000 children per day to and from school. So the one thing we really want to key in on in the budget that's not mentioned in the throne speech is the fact that we absolutely have to have more money for the school bus operators so they can operate efficiently and can make some kind of a profit, but at the same time can make sure that we don't have a deteriorating transportation system for the children they move each and every day.

On top of that, I mentioned a little bit earlier in one of my comments the family physician problem. I think it is an epidemic. I'm hoping all the ridings aren't like they are in Simcoe county, because we are getting it. I can hardly go out to the grocery store without running into somebody who's asking me how they're going to get a family physician. So that is a huge problem. I consider it a high priority and, as I said earlier in my comments in the government throne speech debate, as we move forward we have to take into account the number of doctors who are retiring. There are a lot of doctors who are going to retire in the next five to 10 years, and I don't think that we're adequately replacing them.

1720

Overall, I look forward to hearing comments from other people on this throne speech debate. We haven't been here a lot in the House since June 6 last year, and I'm looking forward to not only the throne speech debate but also the budget showing positive things for Ontario. We have to address the loss of manufacturing jobs. As I said earlier, the priority is on the family physician shortages but also on all these other issues the government faces as well. I hope they can work better with the federal government. It's time to stop this finger pointing. Let's get working with the feds so that we can make sure that all of our tax dollars are put to good use no matter whether they're federal dollars or provincial dollars.

With that, I do appreciate the fact that I have been able to step in and help Mr. Shurman out today. I look forward to his maiden speech in the House. I believe it's sometime next week he will be commenting, and we will get a chance to compliment Mr. Shurman on his maiden speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank MPP Garfield Dunlop, from Simcoe North, for his comments on the throne speech. Some of the comments that I have a little bit more difficulty with are the blaming game that is happening between the Liberals in power in Ontario and the Conservatives in power in Ottawa. This is serving nobody well, and this has to be resolved.

He talks about how he cares about Lake Simcoe and wants a protection act to make sure that Lake Simcoe remains something to be proud of. In the south end of my riding, we have the French River, which is a real jewel of northern Ontario. It is just beautiful, and it has a protection act, but it didn't keep the Ministry of Natural Resources from hauling 100 tandem trucks and dumping loads of fill just beside this beautiful river that is

protected by a protection act. So all I have to say to you is it's nice to have an area protected, but that doesn't give you guarantees that your water is going to stay nice. We now have this huge dump of those 100 loads of fill that are brewing and steaming. The snow can't cover it—we don't know what is in there, but it keeps the snow from melting. It's making a big mess, and this big mess is going right into the French River, which is an area that is protected. Yes, it's nice to be able to have a protection act, but don't think that your problems will end there.

For the labour market agreement and for the colleges and universities, we agree that our college and university students need help. The debt load of our graduates right now is so high that a lot of kids don't go into college and university because they can't afford it.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I have been listening to the member from Simcoe North for almost 20 minutes. I thought he spoke and commented not on the throne speech but on the federal budget. He is talking about goodies in the federal budget, and he forgot about the throne speech, which outlined our vision for the next four years. There are a lot of good things for the people of Ontario, from education to health care, infrastructure, and retaining and attracting more jobs to the province of Ontario. I hope he joins our effort to convince the federal government to come to the table and support Ontario. I guess he didn't read the paper not long ago when the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, commented badly about the economy of Ontario. I was hoping he and his colleagues from the Conservative side will come to support us and convince Mr. Flaherty, who was a member of this House, to support Ontario and to know that Ontario is the engine of the whole country.

Due to our efforts in the province of Ontario, due to the vision of the McGuinty government, we in London–Fanshawe, in London, Ontario, attract a lot of jobs if people are convinced we can support them when they come to Ontario, if people are convinced we have a good education system, if people are convinced we have the best health care around. I know we are facing some difficulties in health care. That's why our government focused on health care, to try to correct it and put it in the right direction, because the damage was so great for a long time.

I hope the member from Simcoe North will join our effort and convince the federal government to come to the table to assist our universities and colleges, to assist us to train our people in Ontario to retain the jobs we have in Ontario, especially manufacturing jobs. It's just a thought.

It's good to talk, but it's very difficult to act. That's why we're asking the federal government not just to talk and to promise, but also to come to the table and deliver. That's what we're looking for.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Simcoe North. As he just pointed out, he was filling in today for the member from Thornhill, whose mother passed away. So thank you, Garfield, for filling in today.

He started out, of course, by praising some community groups in his riding, so I thought I would take advantage of that to note some recent success in our communities, specifically in the community of Huntsville, which was one of the last two communities to be in the Hockeyville competition. Unfortunately, they came a close second to the other Ontario town that was vying for that, but Huntsville certainly has some terrific community spirit. Their junior A hockey team this year, the Huntsville Otters, was top of the league and did extremely well. I think they made it to the seventh game of their playoff series and lost in overtime, unfortunately. I was at that game, a very exciting game. They've also hosted the World Pond Hockey Championship for the last few years, outside at Deerhurst Resort. They've got a triathlon competition, and they're going to be holding a new event, the global Ironman 70.3, this September in Huntsville—so some tremendous community support and a lot of volunteers involved. Of course, in 2006, they also had the Paralympic Winter Games in Huntsville.

The member from Simcoe North touched on many different topics. I'd like to hit on a couple of them. First of all, he mentioned apprenticeships. That's an issue that's come up in my riding, where the rules in Ontario are such that if you have more than one apprentice, you need four journeymen for one apprentice. That's something that needs to change. I attended a skills breakfast put on by Georgian College recently and that was a topic that came up. I've met people who want to become apprentices and they can't because of these very restrictive rules. We have a skills shortage in Ontario. We need to change those rules. So that's something I would like to see this government do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair knows the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka didn't intentionally not mention the successful town for Hockeyville in Ontario, being Kingsville in the great riding of Essex.

Questions and comments? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, there certainly is a lot of crowing around here today, I must say. Congratulations to you all.

I say to the member from Simcoe North, it's interesting, because your comments raised the dander of the Liberal caucus, and they engaged in their favourite sport again. The member from Simcoe North knows well that if anything is happening in this province, whose fault is it?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The feds.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, it can't be the provincial government; it can't be Dalton McGuinty. It's got to be the federal government. So there we go again. Every time something is wrong in this province, it's always the federal government. I don't want to defend Mr. James Flaherty or Mr. Stephen Martin—Stephen Martin, that was good; it was a bit of a comedic theme there—our Prime Minister. God knows, I'm certainly not on the same side as them on probably 99% of battles.

The member is going to get an opportunity a bit later to talk about how the province has got a toolbox. When we did the Constitution in 1867—I want to point something out to all of you—the provinces actually had more power than the federal government to deal with the multitude of issues that face us here in Ontario. We're responsible for education, we're responsible for skills training, not the federal government. We're responsible for most of what happens in economic development. We're responsible for natural resources when it comes to mining, forestry and other industries. We're responsible for most of what happens in the province of Ontario, as far as the issues that face us. I just find it a little bit beyond the pale, quite frankly, to see my Liberal friends, who loved to stand up when they were in opposition and say, "It's Mr. Harris's fault. It's Mr. Forgetful's fault"—whatever his name was, the leader of the NDP at the time. But when it comes to them dealing with taking on responsibility, I say it starts with the first step: Admit you have a problem and then do something about it. I can't remember that guy's name; I've forgotten.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Simcoe North, the last word is yours.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, London–Fanshawe, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Timmins–James Bay for their comments and congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on that winning hockey town of Kingsville, Ontario.

Going back to the comments made by the member from London–Fanshawe: In my nine years here I've taken this federal-provincial conflict quite seriously and I try to follow it as closely as I can. I've asked a lot of federal members and people who are involved with the federal Conservative Party, "What have you put on the table?" Either you're wrong, or they're all wrong together. I've even been to a federal Ontario caucus meeting and all these things were discussed. There are a lot of things I mentioned that are on the table right now, like the labour market agreement. You're getting that money on April 1, and you can spend \$311 million more in post-secondary education. It's federal money. It's the COMRIF top-up money. You have not signed on to the COMRIF top-up money. That's \$65 million. The \$3.1 billion for the Building Canada program is on the table. You have not signed on the dotted line; other provinces have. The reality is that there is a lot of money out there. And here is the \$357 million for the community development trust. That's money for communities that are losing manufacturing jobs.

I suspect what's going to happen is that next week in the budget you're going to announce all of those things, all of those successful communities, and take credit for it. That's the problem: You don't want to give credit to the federal government. They've come out with good programs to help Ontario and you're not giving them any credit.

So it's a two-way street here. We both have to listen and we have to co-operate, but right now I'm believing the federal government ahead of you guys.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The agenda that Dalton McGuinty has laid out in his throne speech fails to take real action that is needed on key issues facing Ontario's families. It cannot be supported. My constituents are looking for concrete action on key issues. They want action on poverty, on long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities, they want action on education, on manufacturing and forestry job loss, on northern prosperity, and on key environmental issues like climate change. This throne speech fails on all fronts: no manufacturing or forestry job strategy; no concrete measures like an immediate \$10 minimum wage to fight poverty—we did get 75 cents five months later, but that's it; no minimum standards of care for seniors in long-term-care homes; and promises on the environment that have been broken so many times that nobody can trust them.

A real, serious leadership agenda would include concrete measures to reduce poverty, to improve care for seniors, to fix our education system, to tackle the climate change crisis and to keep manufacturing and forestry jobs in Ontario. Words won't create or sustain one job. Words won't feed one hungry child, bathe one senior in a long-term-care home or reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one gram. Ontarians deserve more than just words.

Tous les jours, les familles de Nickel Belt demandent des actions concrètes pour régler les problèmes importants. On parle ici de la pauvreté; des soins de longue durée pour les personnes âgées et les personnes handicapées; on parle de l'éducation, de notre système d'éducation; on parle des pertes d'emplois dans les secteurs manufacturiers et forestiers; on parle de la prospérité du nord et des questions environnementales majeures comme les changements climatiques.

Ce discours du trône échoue sur tous les fronts : aucune stratégie en matière d'emploi dans les secteurs manufacturiers ou forestiers; aucune mesure concrète, comme une hausse immédiate du salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure pour combattre la pauvreté—on a eu un petit 75 sous, mais cinq mois trop tard; aucune norme de soin minimal pour les résidents dans les maisons de soins de longue durée; et des promesses relatives à l'environnement qui ont été faites tellement de fois que personne ne veut plus les entendre ni y croire. Un programme social vraiment sérieux comprendrait des mesures concrètes pour réduire la pauvreté, améliorer les soins aux personnes âgées, améliorer le système d'éducation, s'attaquer aux changements climatiques et maintenir les emplois des secteurs manufacturiers et forestiers en Ontario.

Les paroles ne créeront et ne maintiendront aucun emploi, ne nourriront aucun enfant qui a faim, ne donneront de bain à aucune personne dans un foyer de soins de longue durée et ne réduiront pas d'un seul gramme les émissions de gaz à effet de serre. Les Ontariens et Ontariennes méritent plus que des paroles.

The NDP has put forward positive solutions for this new session that would make a real, positive difference in the lives of everyday Ontarians. Dalton McGuinty needs to prove he is serious about running an activist

government by adopting these measures and passing them into law during this legislative session.

The solutions focus on key issues facing Ontario: job loss in manufacturing and forestry communities, poverty, long-term care for seniors, and key environmental issues like climate change. They are measures the government could adopt that would build a stronger Ontario and improve the quality of life for its people.

The practical measures include, first, an industrial hydro rate to sustain jobs and sustain communities that have been hammered by the loss of manufacturing and forestry jobs, while at the same time providing energy conservation and guaranteeing employment. Ontario has lost more than 200,000 jobs—good-paying manufacturing and forestry jobs—since Dalton McGuinty became Premier.

Second, we need a Buy Ontario policy that would sustain manufacturing jobs by giving preferential treatment to goods that are manufactured in Ontario. That exists in other jurisdictions. A member from my caucus, Mr. Gilles Bisson, has introduced a bill today in the House that would do just this for transportation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's me.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That's you, yes.

We also need a jobs commissioner who would bring labour, management and government to the table to avert plant closures and job losses. It is too easy to close down a plant in Ontario. We have to make it worth their while to invest, to look harder to find solutions so that people don't lose their jobs and Ontario continues to be the economic motor of Canada.

We also need real action on the climate change crisis and to resume Ontario's traditional role of funding 50% of public transit operation and costs so cash-strapped municipalities that are struggling with the high costs of provincially downloaded services can freeze transit fares and get more cars off the roads—a quick and simple first step that would address the climate change crisis and the municipal funding crisis at the same time.

We also promote resource revenue sharing with First Nations that would allow First Nations to benefit from the natural resources they control. Ontario's First Nations, especially those in the north, in my riding and in MPP Gilles Bisson's riding, have access to substantial mineral and resource wealth, but the standard of living of many First Nations is about the lowest in Canada and the lowest in Ontario. The McGuinty Liberals need to start treating First Nations fairly, starting with fair revenue sharing so that they can benefit from the mineral wealth of their traditional land.

I want to talk about poverty. We campaigned on a \$10 minimum wage now to ensure that working people get a fair day's pay for a hard day's work. Currently, a person earning a minimum wage of \$8.75 who works 40 hours a week will earn \$18,200, leaving them \$2,600 below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off for people in Toronto. This is if this person lives alone. But statistics also tell us that most people who work full-time on minimum wage are women and most of them have children. So not only are they below the low-income cut-

off for themselves, but it just gets worse and worse because they have to support their families on those poor wages. It just doesn't add up. No matter how good you are at budgeting, you are not going to make ends meet.

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Also, stop the clawback of the national child benefit supplement that takes \$1,500 away from the lowest-income family. Speed up the Ontario child benefit and open up more not-for-profit child care spaces to help the 345,000 Ontario children who live below the poverty line. Could you ever imagine Ontario being the child poverty capital? What a badge of shame to be laid on that government—Ontario, the child poverty capital. I can't believe it. But this government has let that happen, and this throne speech does nothing to change it.

We need more affordable housing to lift the 123,000 people languishing on waiting lists, trying to get rent geared to income. Over the last four years, the McGuinty government has created 3,000 new units. But did you know that out of those 3,000 new units there are only 285 that cost less than \$700 a month, that is, affordable for people on minimum wage and people on low incomes?

We continue to have hundreds and hundreds of homeless people in my riding, certainly in Sudbury. Member Gilles Bisson was talking about the Samaritan centre they have in Timmins and the hard time it has trying to find sustainable funding. We have the same thing in Sudbury; we have the Samaritan Centre in Sudbury. I used to be the director of the health centre and we ran the Corner Clinic. That was a primary care clinic for the homeless. When we first started offering services for the homeless, people would tell us, "There's no homeless in Sudbury. It's way too cold." Well, there is an average of between 350 and 370 people who are homeless in Sudbury, and God knows that in the last couple of weeks we had our fair share of minus 25, minus 30. This is way too cold. We had an episode of a homeless man dying of exposure to the elements right in my own riding, right in Sudbury. This is really hard to believe in a province of such plenty. But yet, we don't have a plan in Ontario to deal with homelessness. We have a plan to plan to deal with poverty. This is not the answer for the hundreds and thousands of people who are presently homeless, who are working for minimum wage trying to make ends meet, or who can't get a job altogether.

We also need a more ambitious public dental care plan to help the thousands of Ontarians who can't afford dental coverage. The proposed Liberal plan leaves huge gaps because it only covers low-income working Ontarians. The plan should cover all low-income Ontarians without coverage and all children regardless of their family income. When it comes to our mouths, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Government investment in dental care can save millions of dollars downstream in the health care system and in productivity.

Last spring, the NDP unveiled its comprehensive Ontario Smiles fair access dental plan. The plan aimed to provide preventive dental care for all Ontario children regardless of income, and for low-income families

regardless of their present employment status. Several months later, the Liberals promised a pale imitation of the same program, a plan that would not provide care for all children and would not provide care for all low-income adults. Furthermore, they've promised no timeline to introduce this program. But at the base of it all, why were our teeth excluded from medicare? No other body part was treated that way. But—

Interruption.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oh, somebody is about to get into trouble. Somebody just lost their BlackBerry—not allowed to have that ring in here.

This is not fair. Lack of ongoing preventive dental care can lead to disease, pain and other complications that cost our health care system so much more in the long run. A recent study by Mount Sinai Hospital showed that dental problems were among the 10 reasons Ontarians visited our overcrowded emergency rooms.

Oral pain and disfiguration can prevent Ontarians from getting and keeping good jobs and further marginalize them in the community. Have you ever seen a homeless person with good teeth in Ontario? That doesn't exist. It just doesn't exist. Try to go for a job interview when you are ashamed to smile, because your teeth look so terrible, because you have not been able to afford dental care. This is not right, this is not the Ontario that I want and this is not the social inclusion that Ontario should work for.

Better health care for seniors: a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on care in long-term care that would reward our parents and grandparents who built Ontario with the dignity in retirement too many are denied. Without a minimum standard, seniors can be neglected, left in incontinence products way too long, develop bed sores, and face a number of social and physical difficulties. Without a minimum standard, family caregivers are forced to take on more and more duties in caring for their aging relatives.

We must also end this competitive bidding process for home care and implement a not-for-profit public home care system that covers everyone in Ontario. Granted, the Minister of Health has halted competitive bidding for now. We hope that the current competitive bidding model that has decimated the not-for-profit home care providers will be a thing of the past. It has compromised the quality of care provided to Ontarians and seriously undervalued and under-compensated those dedicated to providing home care. Ontarians deserve better. Rethink your competitive bidding system. They deserve to have their voice heard before any new home care model is introduced.

After the massive community opposition in the Hamilton area and the loss of two long-term not-for-profit agencies to provide home care services due to the McGuinty Liberals' insistence on competitive bidding, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, finally halted the process. But Minister Smitherman gave no indication that the awarding of any new home care contract would be completely void of the competitive bidding process. Furthermore, they have

failed to consult with Ontarians to determine the home care model that they want. Ontario must eliminate the unstable and unreliable system of competitive bidding in home care that diverts public dollars away from patient care and into the pockets of for-profit companies. Ontarians deserve the highest standard of care delivered and the right provider as close to home as possible. They deserve assurance that the destructive competitive bidding process will not become the model used in their community.

We've heard in the media lately that the hospitals are having a tough time balancing their books. My colleague has talked about the situation in his riding where 60% of the beds in the Timmins hospital are occupied by alternative-level-of-care clients. Those are people that are not being well served. Those are people that need a more robust, publicly funded, high-quality home care system so that they can remain where they want to be, which is in their own home, rather than languishing in hospital beds where they don't receive the care they need. If they do need a long-term-care bed, then they should be assured of 3.5 hours of hands-on care, so that we treat them with the dignity they should have.

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In closing, we are supposed to be very happy that here in Ontario we have a Ministry of Health Promotion. Margaret Best is the Minister of Health Promotion. Here again, those are nice words: "We are going to invest in health promotion. We are going to try to keep people healthy." But at \$300 million, it is not even 1% of the health care budget. How can we take this government seriously when they say, "We want to keep Ontarians healthy. We want to invest in health promotion and disease prevention. We want to change the way we do things, but in order to do this, we will not even invest 1% of our health care dollars in health promotion"? It makes no sense. Here again, they are empty words that we cannot count on.

Ontario deserves better than this. Ontarians deserve better than this. For these reasons, we are going to vote the throne speech down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Nickel Belt. I have high respect for the work she did before she came here working in community health centres. She knows of what she speaks, having that type of a real background.

But it draws me to an important point. I, along with other members, was here on November 29 when a litany of promises was made by the Liberal government. I'm a bit suspicious of promises by the McGuinty government and their type because their record is that they seldom keep their promises. But as we enter this new session, I will be a lot more encompassing in respect of, most importantly, the issue of health care. And the current issue in my riding of Durham is long-term care.

Let's go back here. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised a revolution, as you said, in long-term care. What do we have? We have Minister Smitherman

making fun of persons with incontinence problems. It's embarrassing to listen to a government that makes these promises, which we would all support in real terms, but then when it really comes down to it, they show disrespect for our seniors. This is the Minister of Health, in a news conference, making fun of seniors.

I and most members here have been to long-term-care facilities, and the campaign for additional supports is one that we should all be listening very hard to. Now, what we'll see here is another promise—the revolution that Mr. Smitherman was going to take. His action has been nothing. In the budget on March 25, we'll see what he has to say in real terms to the people of Ontario and, more importantly, to the seniors of Ontario.

So I commend the member from Nickel Belt on her comments, and I'll listen and wait attentively for the budget on March 25.

M. Gilles Bisson: C'est avec grand plaisir que je prends la chance de répliquer au débat de M^{me} Gélinas, membre de Nickel Belt. Elle a soulevé beaucoup de questions, puis j'ai vu dans son discours qu'elle a parlé d'une « issue » qui est pas mal importante pour moi : toute la question de ce qui se passe dans le système de soins de longue durée et dans le système hospitalier à travers la province, mais plus spécifiquement dans la ville de Timmins.

On sait que l'on a un problème présentement à Timmins parce qu'il n'y a pas assez de lits de soins de longue durée dans notre système local. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui ont besoin d'un lit de soins de longue durée et qui se trouvent dans les lits de l'hôpital. C'est un gros problème. Premièrement, c'est beaucoup plus dispendieux; on sait que ça coûte plus cher. Mais, deuxièmement, ce n'est pas la meilleure manière d'administrer un système de santé parce que les répercussions pour la communauté elle-même sont assez sérieuses. Si une personne se pointe à la salle d'urgences, la salle d'urgences est pleine. Pourquoi? Parce que le monde qui attend un lit, qui n'a pas un lit, est quelque part dans le couloir de l'urgence, ce qui veut dire que les « staffs » sont plus pressés et qu'ils ont moins de temps pour répondre aux besoins de ceux qui se rendent au système d'urgence à l'hôpital.

La députée a parfaitement raison quand elle dit que ce gouvernement a besoin de prendre d'une manière très sérieuse la question des soins de longue durée dans la province de l'Ontario—non seulement que l'on a besoin d'augmenter le niveau de services qu'on alloue à chaque résident à 3,5 heures chacun, mais on a besoin d'être capable de répliquer aux lacunes dans le système quand ça vient au manque de lits. Parce que ce n'est pas juste dans la ville de Timmins; on sait qu'à Ottawa, à Sudbury puis dans d'autres communautés c'est un peu le même problème. On a une communauté où le monde vit plus longtemps qui parfois a besoin de beaucoup plus de « support ». Si on n'avait pas ces lits-là pour être capable de prendre soin d'eux, ça ferait beaucoup de pression sur d'autres personnes qui font partie du système.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from Nickel Belt when she was talking about the throne

speech, criticizing the efforts of the government to maintain jobs in the province of Ontario and create more jobs. I would invite the honourable member to come to London, Ontario, to see how our government works very hard to attract many jobs to the city of London.

Last week, we announced a company that's going to come from British Columbia called Original Cakerie. It's going to hire 400 people in London, Ontario, all because our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs supported that initiative with \$2.5 million. There is another company from Korea, called Honwa, that's also going to open in London. All these companies are coming to Ontario because we provide something no other provinces provide to attract those companies to come and open: support in education, health care and financial support. I think it's a good indication of our effort, confidence in our economy and confidence in our government, because those companies wouldn't come and spend \$30 million or \$40 million—one of them, \$100 million—for nothing. They want to make money. We understand that. That's why they're coming to Ontario. They come to London and to many different parts of Ontario to open and invest in this province. I guess it's a great education for our directions and corrections for direction.

I would invite the honourable member to examine the throne speech, because it has a lot of good things in it: support for education, support for health care, support for seniors, support for infrastructure and transit and support for our environment. All of us in this House are working together to make sure we have a good province, a prosperous province that can support our seniors, our students, our children and also the needy among us.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I want to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt on her speech. As John said, she does know her business, and we certainly appreciate it when she does speak in the House.

I want to talk a bit about the Liberals and their broken promises. I know that seems to get people upset, but this happens all the time. Every time we get a throne speech, they tell us a lot of things and nothing happens. It was interesting too to hear the member from London talking about all the jobs they have in London. I'm wondering, did those jobs come from that new garbage dump they got down there? I'm wondering what happened to all those members in London when that happened. They all went and hid. Maybe they're bragging about the new jobs they got there. I guess if that's what they got in London, we could all go down and have a look at this new superdump they're going to get that the members just forgot about. When they came to defend their constituents, there was nothing there; they all went and hid. They made a deal, "Bring your garbage to London. Toronto, bring your garbage down there." I'm just wondering what happened to those members.

I guess we're discussing the throne speech. That's what we've been told here. The unfortunate part is that there's not a lot there for agriculture. I represent an area that has a lot of agriculture. While we appreciate the \$40 million that the province put out to our beef and pork

producers, grains and oilseeds, they forgot a whole section out there. There's a whole section of farmers that didn't get any money. Guys who started in the last couple of years who need money really badly to keep going were forgotten about. They got nothing.

This is really a concern that we have because we're trying to get new farmers into the business. Here we came up with a plan to help farmers and they forgot about them. There have been cases where one person got \$2 million, but the unfortunate part is that that person died two years ago. So these things are happening out there, and we're concerned about the throne speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nickel Belt, you have two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank MPP John O'Toole from Durham for his comments; mon collègue le député de Timmins—James Bay, Gilles Bisson; Khalil Ramal from London—Fanshawe. How did I do with your name?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's okay.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci. And MPP Bill Murdoch from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

There certainly seemed to be a theme. Today in question period, I asked Minister Smitherman about his revolution in long-term care. Well, it has been anything but.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's no Fidel Castro.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, no Fidel Castro; no revolution. But it certainly has an impact in the ridings of each and every one of the members of this Parliament. Something has to be done. We need the revolution. All the groups in long-term care are pointing in the same direction: We need 3.5 hours of hands-on care so we can bring back dignity to the residents of long-term-care homes. This needs to happen. There is an opportunity coming with the budget next Tuesday. It has to be in there.

Mon collègue de Timmins—Baie James a mentionné lui aussi les problèmes dans les soins de longue durée dans son comté. Quand on dit que 60 % des lits d'hôpitaux dans Timmins sont occupés par des clients qui n'ont pas besoin de soins hospitaliers, qui sont mal servis dans les hôpitaux mais pour lesquels on ne peut rien offrir de mieux, c'est pitoyable. Le ministre de la Santé nous parlait d'une révolution dans les soins de longue durée, mais il n'y en a pas eu de révolution. On en a besoin d'une. Tout le monde s'entend : on a besoin de 3,5 heures de soins, au minimum, par résident. Quand le membre nous parle de London, c'est une des communautés où on retrouve le plus gros taux de—London is one of the places that has the highest rate of unemployment. I certainly wouldn't put it as a shining example.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you to all. It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock, Tuesday, March 18.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Toby Barrett, Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue, Charles Sousa
Clerk / Greffier: William Short

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: David Oraziotti
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell, Linda Jeffrey,
Kuldip Kular, Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro,
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti, Joyce Savoline
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael Brown, Kevin Flynn, France Gélinas,
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro,
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals, Maria Van Bommel
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos,
Jeff Leal, Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi,
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Kevin Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney,
Joe Dickson, Kevin Flynn, Sylvia Jones,
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio, Peter Tabuns
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jerry Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman, Andrea Horwath,
Phil McNeely, Jerry Ouellette, Liz Sandals,
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle, Kim Craiton,
Gerry Martiniuk, Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch,
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo,
Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qadri,
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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