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**Official Report  
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**Journal  
des débats  
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**Tuesday 8 April 2008**

**Mardi 8 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I rise today in support of the future of the emergency services available at the Cottage Hospital in Uxbridge, in my riding of Durham. Last October, during the provincial election, the Liberal candidate, Betty Somerville, made a complete and open commitment to ensuring that, if she was elected, the emergency would remain open and fully staffed. I was supportive of that, as was the community. In December, this House received a petition signed by 18,387 citizens in response to the fear that the Uxbridge hospital would lose its emergency department and other local health services, let alone the difficulty of recruiting doctors.

I'm disappointed that, three months later, media reports are saying that the ER staff shortage could be worse this summer than last. This shortage is due in part to scheduled vacations, doctors going on leave, and the continuing shortages of doctors themselves. It's also due to the failure of this government to adequately address the doctor shortage across the province of Ontario.

I'll continue to keep in touch with Uxbridge mayor Bob Shepherd; Dr. Michael Damus, the chief of staff at Uxbridge; Janet Beed, president and CEO of the Markham Stouffville Hospital; and Roger Peirson, volunteer chair of the Uxbridge physician recruitment committee.

The community is doing everything possible to keep the ER open, to support the local hospital and recruit new doctors, but they can't do it alone. I ask the Premier and the Minister of Health to step up to the job and fulfill your promises. Keep the Uxbridge hospital—

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

#### HOUSE SITTINGS

#### HEURES DE SÉANCE

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Yesterday marked the first evening sitting of the 39th Parliament. This is five months after the Legislature unanimously endorsed my idea of making Queen's Park more family friendly, and four months after I requested the Liberals act on this endorsement.

The Liberals are either supportive of making Queen's Park more family friendly or they are not.

Les libéraux ou offrent leur « support » pour rendre Queen's Park plus amical aux familles ou ils ne l'offrent pas. Leurs actions ou manque d'actions parlent plus fort que leurs mots.

Their actions, or lack of actions, speak louder than words.

To date, the Liberals have just paid lip service to making politics more family friendly for the men and women in this Legislature. The Liberals have broken their promise by reconvening night sittings and by ignoring the panel that they set up to make this place more family friendly.

I urge the Liberals to get serious, to respect the Legislature's wishes, and to get to work and make this place more family friendly

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the visitors today from Equal Voice Canada that we're going to receive at the House, at the reception that they'll be hosting today after proceedings.

#### HOSPITALS OF ONTARIO PENSION PLAN

**Mr. David Zimmer:** I would like to welcome to the House today members of the hospitals of Ontario pension plan, or, as many of us call it, HOOPP.

HOOPP is the pension plan for retired Ontario health care workers. This plan is notable in that its founding in 1960 predates the Canada pension plan and the old age security. At the launch, there were only 79 participating employers, with fewer than 10,000 members and several hundred pensioners. Over the years this plan has grown. Today, close to 250,000 people in Ontario, including the vast majority of nurses who are covered by a pension plan, depend on HOOPP for their pension benefits.

While our government continues to work on the issue of human health resources, I was interested in learning that HOOPP plays a role in this by assisting with the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in Ontario. It is comforting to know that workers in the health care field have a pension plan with a proven track record of solid management and a good return on investment.

Mr Speaker, I hope you and, indeed, all members of this House will join me in welcoming the members of the hospitals of Ontario pension plan to the House today. Welcome, HOOPP.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would like to take this opportunity, because the class will have to leave a little earlier, on behalf of the member from Mississauga South to welcome the grade 5 students from St. Edmund school. They are seated in the west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

## HEALTH PREMIUMS

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Tonight we debate a motion calling for the review of the infamous tax that broke the promise-breakers' back, the so-called health tax.

Four and a half years ago, then Liberal leader McGuinty stared through our TV screens and told us, "I won't raise your taxes," before signing the taxpayers' protection pledge. Once elected, the man who became known as Pinocchio turned his back on his pledge, introduced the biggest—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Again, we're trying to maintain some decorum here. Use of words that cause an uproar in the House do a disservice to all of us. I ask that you withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I withdraw.

He turned his back on his pledge and introduced the biggest single hike in the history of Ontario, and set us on a course of serial promise-breaking and commitment-killing that has cemented the legacy of the man who would be king.

In the wake of the 2004 budget boondoggle and its infamous tax, the Premier's promise-breaking inspired those across the province to let this government know what they thought of an elected official who promised change and then changed his mind.

As a member of the truth squad, I recall signs and slogans on the Queen's Park lawn, where taxpayers found their voices: "Caution: Serial promise-breaker on the loose." True to form, the Premier has told us that while he promised this review when he introduced the tax, he'd already decided nothing will change. Promise-breaking will remain alive and well in this province.

1340

## HEPATITIS C

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** Ontarians who were victims of tainted blood want to know why money is left over in the Ontario hepatitis C assistance plan. This plan was set up to provide financial assistance to hep C victims outside the 1986-90 window. Two hundred million dollars was set aside to compensate these individuals, and \$25,000 was given to the 3,700 who qualified, leaving \$108 million unspent.

In my riding, we have an advocate extraordinaire who this month put up \$5,000 of his own money to launch a health promotion campaign on hep C, the Break the Silence and Win contest. Mr. Ernie Zivny says the prov-

incial government has a moral obligation to treat all Ontario hep C victims of tainted blood in a fair and equal manner regardless of when they contracted the disease. He says it's not only the federal government that's to blame for the tainted blood but the Ontario government bears responsibility too.

So what to make of the \$108 million left unspent in the plan? Victims of tainted blood want to know why this government didn't use all the money originally promised to help Ontarians with hep C. They want to know why, 10 years after the plan was first introduced, millions are left unspent.

Ontarians living with hep C shouldn't have to wait for answers because they've waited too long already. Their health is not getting any better and the least we can do is give them the assistance that they need. As Ernie Zivny says, it's simply the right thing to do.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION  
IN PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I'm delighted to rise today to welcome Equal Voice to the Ontario Legislature. They are here to celebrate more women—more women candidates in 2007, more women in the Legislature and more women historically than ever before. Equal Voice, Canada's multi-partisan organization, aims to create a climate of change in which more women are elected to govern in Canada and in Ontario.

Equal Voice data show that when women run, they win, as demonstrated by the number of female members elected in 2007. It also shows that parties need to be proactive in recruiting as well as training more women candidates. The McGuinty Liberals have done just that. This past election, the Ontario Liberals not only met their commitment with regard to female candidates, they exceeded it. In fact, more than one third of the total number of Liberal candidates were women. And in 2007, the number of women elected to Queen's Park reached the historic milestone of 27%.

As chair of the Ontario women's Liberal caucus, I have the privilege of working with some of Ontario's most insightful politicians.

All of us, men and women, must take responsibility for achieving the goal of more women. We must encourage more women to get involved and take part in shaping the future of Ontario for generations to come. To that end, I encourage all MPPs to attend tonight's Equal Voice reception, to show their support for all the women of the Legislature, past, present and future.

## LORETTO CONVENT

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Last week in my riding of Guelph, I was pleased to announce that Guelph will receive \$5 million from the MIII fund to restore the Loretto Convent building into a new home for the Guelph Civic Museum. This project is so important to the constituents of my

riding that the announcement was called a “magic moment” by the Guelph Mercury.

The Loretto Convent, one of several historic buildings surrounding Guelph’s magnificent Church of Our Lady on Catholic Hill, was slated for demolition. The city said that this project to save the convent could only go ahead if upper-tier governments contributed \$6 million. The federal government committed \$1 million. With the province’s \$5-million contribution, we have reached the magic number.

The \$450-million MIII fund was unique because it allowed municipalities to apply for cultural infrastructure instead of just roads and bridges.

My constituents are thrilled that this funding from the province will allow the Loretto Convent to be completely restored to its former glory and that we will be able to house a museum twice as big as the one at the current site, with more staff and more programming. This is great news for Guelph.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I’m very pleased to announce that in the past week, the Liberal government has invested over \$2,121,000 in valuable resources assisting the constituents of York West.

I proudly announce that the Philip Aziz Centre was the recipient of over \$2 million. A children’s hospice, the Philip Aziz Centre provides practical, physical, emotional and spiritual support for people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

Another project, the Jane-Finch Caring Village, received over \$100,000. This organization has under its umbrella the city parks and recreation, the community health centres, the school board and York University faculty.

The Hincks-Dellcrest Treatment Centre and the Conflict Mediation Services of Downsview, two other worthy recipients, received over \$53,000.

I’m proud that the McGuinty government’s mandate is prioritizing those in greatest need. Funding allocation is justly flowing not only to facilitate our young people’s success but to the destitute and those who do not have a voice but who desperately need to be heard.

Again, my gratitude and congratulations to all these community groups who do such an outstanding job in my riding and continue to provide good, quality service to all our citizens in the riding of York West.

### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I’m pleased to acknowledge two important initiatives in our budget that will greatly assist our seniors and hard-working business owners in Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

A new property tax grant is making it easier for more Ontario seniors to stay in their homes. The 2008 budget includes a new property tax grant for seniors with low and moderate incomes who own their own homes.

During our last term we increased the tax credit by 25%, from \$500 to \$625. Under the new plan, up to \$250 more will be made available to approximately 550,000 seniors by 2009. By 2010, this new tax grant will rise to \$500. When combined with the existing property and sales tax credit to seniors, some seniors could see up to \$1,075 in total tax relief in 2009, and up to \$1,325 in 2010. This is just one more example of how our government is working for seniors.

We are also accelerating business education tax rate cuts for northern businesses over the next three years, which will save businesses in Thunder Bay over \$25 million in tax savings, another \$216,000 in Oliver Paipoonge and almost \$90,000 in Atikokan. Overall, rates will be reduced more quickly in 85 northern municipalities, benefiting more than 30,000 businesses, resulting in total savings of more than \$70 million over the next three years.

We are also investing in innovation and lowering business costs.

All of these initiatives combine a vision for our province that seeks to assist the most vulnerable, while at the same time expanding economic opportunities for all, to spur investment, growth and jobs.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### ONTARIO FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR L’OFFICE DES TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS ÉDUCATIVES DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE DE L’ONTARIO

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to enact the Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008 and make complementary amendments to the Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act / Projet de loi 55, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur l’Office des télécommunications éducatives de langue française de l’Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à la Loi sur l’Office de la télécommunication éducative de l’Ontario.

**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):** The minister for a short statement.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** In ministerial statements, please.

## MOTIONS

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 8, 2008, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** 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 1350 to 1355.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Ramsay, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Rinaldi, Lou
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Greg
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	Naqvi, Yasir	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Pupatello, Sandra	Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed will rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Shurman, Peter
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 48; the nays are 26.

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

*Agreed to.*

## LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg the indulgence of the members to allow the pages time to assemble for introduction.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving the first session of the 39th Parliament: Alex Ballagh, Simcoe-Grey; Marco

Bellissimo, York Centre; Lucas Bongers, Leeds-Grenville; Kelsey Fedus, Hamilton Mountain; Marcus Glenie, Whitby-Oshawa; Thomas Grainger, London North Centre; Jordynne Hislop, Simcoe North; Victoria Jennings, Parkdale-High Park; Bethany Jones, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Rheanna Kendrick, Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Georgia LaMarre, Essex; Adam Laskaris, Don Valley West; Michael Louws, Durham; Ida Mahmoudi, Don Valley East; Sarah Palmeto, Ajax-Pickering; Prakash Pandya, Windsor West; Paul Sebastian, Mississauga South; Laura Shum, Wellington-Halton Hills; and Michael Thomas-Fulford, Trinity-Spadina.

Welcome to the pages.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

## TFO

**L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** TFO est un exceptionnel atout pour les élèves et les enseignantes et enseignants francophones qui enrichit l'expérience en salle de classe.

Au-delà de la salle de classe, TFO enrichit la culture franco-ontarienne. Et si la culture franco-ontarienne est enrichie, la culture ontarienne est enrichie. Les commentaires sur TFO que nous recevons des intervenants francophones sont extraordinairement positifs. En effet, TFO est considéré par beaucoup, dont moi-même, comme une ressource indispensable au personnel enseignant, aux élèves et aux parents d'expression française.

Il est important d'appuyer l'apprentissage en français avec des ressources en dehors de la salle de classe. C'est important parce qu'il n'y a simplement pas autant de ressources externes pour les élèves et les enseignantes et enseignants en français qu'en anglais. C'est là que TFO répond à certains besoins bien spécifiques. Mais TFO n'est pas simplement un outil d'apprentissage. C'est aussi une institution à la base même de l'identité et de la vitalité culturelle franco-ontariennes.

That's why I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce legislation that would, if passed, formally complete the process of making TFO into an independent entity. It's a very good thing.

Notre gouvernement a pris l'engagement pour un TFO indépendant il y a deux ans, et ce projet de loi est la dernière étape nécessaire pour officialiser l'indépendance de TFO par rapport à TVOntario. Grâce à un décret pris en avril dernier, TFO a son propre budget, son propre conseil d'administration et ses propres bureaux. TFO est devenu une partie intégrante de la stratégie d'éducation et de la politique d'aménagement linguistique de notre gouvernement.

TFO is focused on meeting the needs of Franco-Ontarian students by integrating its television program-

ming, multimedia content and website into a seamless offering of resources, and by filling the gaps between the needs of students and teachers and the resources available in our schools.

This includes making 4,000 educational television programs available to French-language schools, 1,600 of these for free over the Internet, and making 225 pedagogical guides available to teachers through the TFO website free of charge.

L'une de ces ressources est une aide en ligne appelée SOS Devoirs. Je crois comprendre que près de 90 000 élèves, de plus de 350 écoles, ont utilisé ce service l'année dernière. La bibliothèque virtuelle de SOS Devoirs est une mine d'informations, de liens, d'images et d'exercices que les élèves francophones auraient beaucoup de mal à trouver ailleurs au monde.

Ce n'est là qu'un exemple de la façon dont TFO est d'une aide précieuse aux enseignants, aux élèves et aux parents, et c'est pourquoi l'adoption de ce projet de loi visant à officialiser l'indépendance de TFO est si importante. Nous voulons que TFO continue à offrir des ressources qui répondent aux besoins uniques des élèves francophones. Autrement dit, nous voulons rendre l'indépendance de TFO permanente afin d'appuyer nos élèves, nos parents et notre personnel enseignant franco-ontariens.

#### TFO

**L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** C'est une journée extrêmement importante pour les francophones de l'Ontario.

Ma collègue et ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Kathleen Wynne, dépose un projet de loi qui fera de TFO une entité autonome. Je veux la remercier de m'avoir permis de parler sur ce sujet aujourd'hui.

Ce projet de loi est essentiel pour que les écoles de langue française soient fortes et dynamiques. La loi proposée est essentielle à la réussite scolaire des apprenantes et apprenants de langue française en Ontario, et elle est essentielle à la préservation du riche patrimoine culturel de l'Ontario.

Nous avons donc besoin d'un TFO solide et autonome, qui sera la pierre angulaire des progrès continus que nous réalisons en éducation en langue française, et nous en avons réalisé beaucoup. Nous avons éliminé les obstacles artificiels entre les écoles et l'éducation et la formation postsecondaires de langue française.

La récente expansion de la Direction des politiques et programmes d'éducation en langue française, qui inclut maintenant le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités de l'Ontario, est un grand exemple de cette élimination.

Nous avons aussi élargi l'accès aux études postsecondaires des étudiants et étudiantes francophones du nord-est de l'Ontario, en appuyant la construction du nouveau campus du Collège Boréal à Timmins.

Enfin, nous avons récemment affecté 1 \$ million au financement initial destiné à améliorer la sensibilisation à l'éducation en langue française en Ontario.

La population francophone de l'Ontario est fière des programmes offerts par TFO. Pour la communauté franco-ontarienne, TFO nous a donné plus qu'un moyen d'information. La chaîne a aussi donné à la francophonie ontarienne une voix et une identité : une voix grâce à laquelle nous communiquons avec les autres communautés francophones de l'Ontario; une voix par laquelle nous exprimons notre identité spécifique et nous nous faisons connaître aux francophones du monde entier. Cette identité est la synthèse de ce que la francophonie ontarienne a de mieux à offrir, une identité propre dont la diversité régionale et culturelle est reflétée dans les émissions et les reportages audacieux de TFO.

Nous avons besoin de TFO pour continuer de concevoir d'excellents programmes et contenus multimédias en français.

Nous devons continuer de diffuser la langue et la culture françaises aux quatre coins de l'Ontario. Nous devons continuer d'offrir des ressources qui répondent aux besoins uniques des élèves francophones.

Si ce projet de loi est adopté, il accordera son autonomie à TFO et fournira un meilleur soutien à nos élèves. Il s'agit d'un important pas en avant tant pour les élèves et leurs parents que pour la vitalité culturelle de la province.

#### METIS NATION

#### NATION MÉTISSE

**L'hon. Michael Bryant:** C'est aujourd'hui le moment le plus historique et important pour la Nation Métisse et pour M. le président, Tony Belcourt.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today to tell you about the Ontario government's new, important historic moment with the Metis Nation of Ontario. One hundred and thirty-eight years ago, this Legislature placed a bounty on the head of Louis Riel. It's hard to believe: an elected member of Parliament and a great leader of the Metis Nation, and this Legislature put a bounty on his head.

Fast forward to 2008. Today, the Ontario government is a friend and a partner with the Metis Nation of Ontario.

#### 1410

At the request of the Metis leadership, today we are launching formal discussions with the Metis Nation of Ontario to develop a new and historic framework agreement based on the principles of respect and partnership.

Today, we stand next to one another to honour the culture, language and heritage of Metis people in Ontario. We're taking the next steps to further strengthen our joint commitment to improving the well-being and prosperity of Metis communities and all Ontarians.

Working in collaboration with the Metis Nation of Ontario, together we are identifying the priorities and approaches necessary in order to recognize the distinct

needs of Metis in Ontario, as noted in the Ipperwash Inquiry Report recommendations.

Le respect, la reconnaissance et la réconciliation sont les principes qui orientent l'approche adoptée par le gouvernement de l'Ontario concernant la Nation Metisse.

A key step in developing this bilateral framework agreement recognizes the historic and ongoing contributions of Metis people in Ontario. By doing this, we are seeking to help ensure a better quality of life for current and future members of the Metis community across the province.

We are also pleased to provide the capacity needed; in particular, an additional \$200,000 to support the work on developing the framework within the existing bilateral relationship, in addition to the \$5 million invested annually and provided to the Metis Nation of Ontario primarily for programs and services.

Today also, I'm very pleased to recognize the contributions of the outgoing president of the Metis Nation of Ontario, Tony Belcourt, who is here with us today. Mr. Belcourt has worked tirelessly for his beliefs and has been a strong and passionate advocate of Metis people. Recently, he announced his retirement and has been honoured by the Metis National Council with an appointment as ambassador for the Metis Nation.

Tony Belcourt will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the most influential members of the Metis community in Ontario and for his many achievements, including the instrumental role he played in founding the Metis Nation of Ontario almost 15 years ago.

Many of the people in this House have worked with president Tony Belcourt over at least the past 15 years of his leadership of the Metis Nation of Ontario. I have had the opportunity to do so as well. I know all members share not only in offering him sincere thanks for his leadership and best wishes, but also, to Mr. Belcourt, a grateful Ontario thanks you.

## CULTURAL FUNDING

### SUBVENTIONS CULTURELLES

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** Ontario's prosperity depends on developing our most innovative sectors. The entertainment and cluster sector is at the heart of Ontario's knowledge-based economy. Investing in arts and culture is part of our government's five-point plan to strengthen the economy and enhance Ontario's competitiveness.

Grâce à des investissements dans les secteurs caractérisés par une croissance, comme les industries du divertissement et de la création, le gouvernement stimule notre économie et améliore la qualité de vie des Ontariennes et Ontariens.

Culture is a key economic sector in Ontario—by GDP, by employment and as a driver for tourism. The culture sector generates almost \$20 billion of Ontario's gross domestic product. At 4.2% of the GDP, culture is a bigger contributor to the Ontario economy than agri-

culture, fishing, mining, oil and gas extraction and utilities combined.

I'm pleased to tell you that in the past 10 years, employment in the entertainment and creative cluster has grown at twice the rate as the overall Ontario economy, creating 80,000 net new jobs. In fact, here in Ontario, cultural industries are the third largest in North America by employment, after only California and New York. Cultural institutions such as the ROM, the AGO, the McMichael art gallery and the National Ballet attract visitors from across the country and indeed from around the world to our fair province. Ontario's cultural tourism generates more than \$4.5 billion annually—that's just in tourism—across Ontario.

Our government is taking bold steps to ensure that this sector continues to thrive. That's why in our budget, funding to the Ministry of Culture has been increased by \$63 million over the next four years.

Ceci permettra à notre gouvernement de continuer à soutenir des organismes comme le Conseil des arts de l'Ontario et la Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario—deux agences qui soutiennent et stimulent le développement artistique à travers l'Ontario. Cette augmentation nous permettra de mettre l'accent sur des secteurs clés que nous avons ciblés aux fins d'une croissance éventuelle.

For example, we will be enhancing the highly successful Ontario interactive digital media tax credit, which helps Ontario corporations create and distribute interactive digital media products. To further support digital media, our government, in our budget, is investing \$7 million over the next four years to expand the interactive digital media fund, which helps producers create market-ready digital products. This is one of many funds delivered by my ministry's agency, the Ontario Media Development Corp. Such funds will ensure that digital media will continue to be an economic driver in Ontario and keep us on the leading edge internationally.

To help promote Ontario culture at home and abroad, the Premier announced yesterday that our government is investing \$15 million to maximize the long-term success of the Luminato Festival for Arts and Creativity.

L'édition inaugurale du festival Luminato a attiré plus d'un million de visiteurs dans plus de 100 événements organisés dans toute la ville de Toronto et a contribué à l'économie à la hauteur de plus de 78 \$ millions.

By supporting the development of our cultural industries and our best creative talent, we are helping to ensure that Ontario remains competitive in that global entertainment marketplace. The 2008 budget underscores this government's belief that culture is not only about who we are and who we want to be, and necessary for the quality of life of people in Ontario, but is also critical to help in growing our economy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

TFO

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I will be responding to Ministers Wynne, Meilleur and Carroll today.



C'est ma première opportunité de parler comme critique des Affaires francophones pour le Parti conservateur. Je veux dire que je suis très heureux de savoir que le gouvernement a maintenant l'intention de considérer la TFO comme entité séparée et unique dans le domaine de la télévision pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

Je pense que c'est quelque chose que nos francophones peuvent célébrer, parce qu'il est enfin clair que nous avons une communauté propre ici. Les Ontariens francophones sont une partie de l'histoire originale de notre province et ils vont être bien servis avec un service unique et excellent.

J'avais l'opportunité il y a plusieurs semaines de visiter le nouveau siège social de TFO. J'étais très impressionné par la qualité de l'équipement technique et la qualité des productions. Mais plus que cela, je m'intéressais bien à rencontrer les membres de l'équipe TFO. Je pense que, comme d'habitude, la qualité des gens qui travaillent là est la plus grande ressource à TFO.

Je suis né à Montréal et j'ai appris à parler le français là, mais j'avais perdu la plupart de ma capacité récemment. Mais j'ai commencé à renouveler mon habileté dans la langue française, et une des sources premières pour pratiquer, pour moi, était un programme de TFO, le Panorama. Alors, le Parti conservateur attendra recevoir les détails de ce nouveau projet de loi, comme d'habitude, mais j'applaudie l'idée et je félicite la TFO comme organisme exceptionnel et, bientôt, comme entité unique, nouvelle et indépendante.

1420

#### CULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I want to comment now in regard to announcements made by the Minister of Culture. No doubt, culture is the glue that binds a society, so I won't speak against giving it a boost. In the recent provincial budget, it was announced that the provincial government intends to increase funding to the Ministry of Culture by \$63 million over the next four years. The \$63 million represents a sizable increase in this ministry's budget; in other words, a lot of glue. We have to take care with just how we apply that glue and in what quantity.

By the government's own estimate, job growth in the entertainment and creative cluster outpaced the rest of the economy. This is a relative position. I don't believe this was due to particularly remarkable performance in this sector, but rather to extremely poor performance in all other sectors of the Ontario economy.

In the days since the provincial budget was read in this chamber, the government has been on a spending spree: \$15 million for the Luminato festival, \$12 million in one-time funding for the ROM, \$10 million to expand the Toronto Reference Library. These are all excellent festivals and organizations, and I commend the minister for recognizing their importance and the importance of the cultural sector in our quality of life here in Ontario. How-

ever, I question the wisdom of increasing the budget of this ministry by \$63 million at a time when the Ontario economy can ill afford it.

I also question the government's continued practice of providing one-off funding to those in need. It denies reliable annual funds to any organization on the receiving end. If this government were serious about helping our cultural sector, it would provide frugal, smartly targeted, sustainable investments. Instead, we get the same tired Liberal practice of money being thrown at issues with no real hope of long-term, positive impact. I wonder if slush funding has found its way into culture. The people of Ontario deserve better.

#### METIS NATION

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It's my pleasure today to welcome representatives of the Metis Nation of Ontario to the Ontario Legislature; in particular, outgoing President Tony Belcourt, who has been serving the Metis Nation of Ontario for some 14 years, since May 4, 1994. Congratulations, Tony, and thank you for your service.

I would also like to welcome other members of the delegation representing the Metis Nation of Ontario, including Chair Gary Lipinski, who I understand is going to be in an election, coming up in May, to replace Tony. I'm sure he'll do well at that.

Tony, I understand from Garfield that your golf game is already pretty good. But it will probably improve, now that you have a little more time on your hands.

Congratulations on launching discussions to negotiate a new framework agreement with the Ontario government. I know it is very important to the Metis Nation of Ontario to be recognized by the Ontario government.

#### CULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** There's no question that the cultural sector, the arts sector in this province, deserves support. It's unfortunate that what the cultural sector needed was a great novel, and what it got was a very short story. What it needed was a fully staged opera, and what it got was a very brief duet.

The reality is that we have a film sector in this province, in this city, that needs ongoing, sustainable, predictable support. What they got was a tax break they had fought very hard for, but which is time limited to the end of 2009. There are investments being made in my riding: Filmport, a major studio that needs to be able to book for years, not just into the next calendar year. The decision not to make that ongoing funding was a mistake.

I want to talk as well about the rest of the arts sector. The retail sales tax exemption for tickets for theatres under 3,200 seats is a small step, a useful step. But the reality—the minister knows this, because I know she has gone to arts receptions and has talked to people in the arts—is that the theatre sector in this province is facing crushing burdens in terms of capital and in terms of

operating. Those burdens have not been lifted by this budget.

The performing arts in Ontario, in Toronto, face tremendous difficulty. That difficulty has not been lifted. They deserve much better; they should have gotten it from you.

#### TFO

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Moi aussi, le 26 mars dernier, j'ai eu l'honneur et le privilège de participer à l'ouverture officielle des nouveaux locaux de TFO. C'était un événement très attendu par la communauté francophone. M<sup>me</sup> Gisèle Chrétien, la présidente de TFO—une bonne résidente de Nickel Belt, je dois rajouter—rayonnait de plaisir. C'était un bel événement.

Mais ça n'a pas été facile. Tous les membres de l'Ontario français ont revendiqué longtemps avant d'être entendus, mais ce soir-là c'était la fête. On célébrait l'indépendance de TFO. Pour la population francophone, il est important de célébrer ces petites victoires, parce qu'elles ne sont ni nombreuses ni fréquentes. Les membres de l'équipe de TFO, la télévision éducative et culturelle de l'Ontario français, peuvent maintenant travailler en français. Ils ont eu leur indépendance, mais pour vraiment bien représenter l'Ontario français, ils auraient besoin d'une subvention suffisante pour être capables d'ouvrir des locaux à l'extérieur de Toronto. Sudbury, je suis sûre, serait une bonne place pour eux. Comme je l'ai mentionné à la ministre des Affaires francophones, c'était un bel événement.

Par contre, la route demeure longue pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, qui ont compris depuis longtemps que pour survivre et s'épanouir, ils ont besoin de leurs propres institutions. TFO, c'est un pas de plus, mais la route est encore longue.

#### METIS NATION

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Let me first of all welcome all the representatives of the Metis Nation of Ontario to the Legislature today; most of all, Tony Belcourt, and one of my constituents, Gary Lipinski.

I know they have worked very long and very hard over a number of years, with successive provincial governments, to try to have Metis rights recognized and the interests of Metis people recognized, and so I want to congratulate them on today's announcement.

All aboriginal peoples in Ontario need to be treated with respect and recognition when dealing with governments, both the Ontario government and the federal government, and I want to say to the Metis Nation of Ontario that we wish you every success in these discussions.

However, I must note that when the minister was asked by members of the media about the content of the discussions, his response was that in the proposed discussions a variety of issues would be discussed. I hope you are able to nail him down more than the media have been able to today.

I also want to say to the government, though, that the government's track record with First Nations is not very good. The message that has been received by First Nations communities across northern Ontario is that if they dare to speak out against mining exploration or mining development in their traditional territory, they may wind up in jail. That is very much the message that has been received. So I say to the government that I hope you conduct these discussions better, and with more effectiveness, than you have failed to conduct consultation and accommodation of First Nations in the far north.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** There are a few individuals I would like to recognize. First, I want to thank members for their co-operation in providing these to me. I would just let you know as well that inside your desks is a little standardized form; I thank the member from Parkdale-High Park for using it. Those are available to you, and I would appreciate receiving them as early as possible.

I would like to introduce some guests, on behalf of the members. On behalf of the member from Parkdale-High Park, seated in the west members' gallery are Kalsang Tsono, Kunga Chotak and Salden Kunga, from the Tibetan Association of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Kenora-Rainy River, seated in the west members' gallery is Mr. Martin Devine, an activist within the disabled community. Welcome, Mr. Devine.

#### 1430

In the west gallery, we'd like to welcome Mr. Tim Grainger, the father of page Tom Grainger. We welcome you here today as well.

On behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, seated in the east members' gallery are Mr. Tony Belcourt, president of the Metis Nation of Ontario; Mr. Gary Lipinski, provisional council of the Metis Nation; France Picotte, provisional council of the Metis Nation; Reta Gordon, provisional council, Metis Nation; Tim Pile, secretary treasurer of the Metis Nation; Sharon McBride, Ontario region 8 councillor; Pierre Lefebvre, executive director, Metis Nation of Ontario; Hank Rowlinson, senior policy analyst; Katelin Peltier, director of communications; and Doug Wilson, director of health. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. Your government created the Ontario Power Authority in 2004. At the time, your then Minister of Energy, Mr. Duncan, described it as "a highly efficient,

virtual agency” that will only have 10 to 15 employees. There are now 100 employees and 51 of them are making over \$100,000 a year. Premier, how do you justify bloating this bureaucracy when, today, we hear your government is firing nurses and closing hospital beds?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** First of all, just to set the record straight, we are certainly not closing hospitals. That was done under the Conservative government. And we’re not firing nurses; in fact, we’re hiring them by the thousands. They fired them by the thousands. Just so we’re clear on that score.

Let me just take the opportunity to say something about the Ontario Power Authority. It assumes a very important responsibility on behalf of the people of Ontario. For one thing, it has in place a plan to deliver on a 20-year power supply plan to make sure we have a continual, reliable, affordable, environmentally safe supply of power during the course of the next 20 years. They’re also very effective at driving our shared conservation agenda.

I know it’s easy to criticize in the abstract, but I think it’s important for Ontarians to understand exactly what this authority does for all of us: Make sure the lights stay on and make sure we’re driving hard on a conservation agenda.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Speaker, I don’t know if you heard an explanation there for the original indication of staff numbers; I certainly didn’t.

Another example, Premier, of your profligate approach to governing is the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. After giving their fired CEO a \$720,000 going-away present, after a significant decline in revenues, we hear of a 107% increase in the number of \$100,000-plus earners. As well, the VP’s salary just last year jumped 20%.

You’re telling hard-working Ontarians to steel themselves against an economic slowdown, you’re firing nurses and closing hospital beds while at the same time fattening the bureaucracy and doling out executive salary increases at 10 times the rate of inflation. How do you justify that?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, we are not closing hospitals; they did that. We are not firing nurses; they did that.

It would be helpful for non-partisan observers if we were to cut to the chase on this matter. What the Conservatives believe is that in order for us to address our shared economic challenge, we should cut \$5 billion out of government revenue. That’s what they believe. In order to arrive at that figure, we would have to close hospitals, fire nurses, underfund our schools, underfund our colleges and universities and drive up tuition fees. We would have to cut supports for our most vulnerable members of our extended Ontario family. That’s what they’re saying we have to do; we won’t do that.

We have in place a plan to find an additional \$1 billion in savings. We found \$800 million last year; we’ll find \$1 billion this year, but we’ll do it in a way that doesn’t compromise public services.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I’ll remind viewers again, still no answers to the questions. I’ll give the Premier a few more examples. The CEO of LCBO saw his salary increase 22% this year; the vice-president of merchandising at LCBO saw his salary increase 19%; the CEO of the Toronto Centre LHIN, the local health integration network, a whopping 75% pay increase; the salary of the president of the WSIB—I should mention, a former Liberal MPP—has jumped 56% in the past two years. We’ve seen nurses fired, hospital beds closed, but for high-rolling Liberal porkers, it’s an all-you-can-eat buffet. Premier, how do you justify this?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The leader of the official opposition weaves some wonderful magical tales which have nothing to do with reality. But I think it’s important to understand what it is that the Conservatives really want to do. They just don’t have the strength on certain days to say it. They think we should cut taxes by about \$3 billion and we should eliminate the Ontario health premium. They think we should deprive the Ontario government of \$5 billion in revenues. There’s only one way to accomplish that, and that is to close hospitals, to fire nurses, to underfund our schools, to fire water and meat inspectors and to cut social assistance programs. That’s what they’re talking about. We’re not going to do that.

We will find an additional \$1 billion in savings—last year we found \$800 million—and we’ll do it in a way that does not compromise the public services that families have to count on.

## NURSES

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is for the Premier. Despite your rhetoric, about two thirds of the people surveyed in a year-end poll indicated they’d seen no improvement in health care. Now we learn in the Toronto Star today that 72 registered nurses are going to be fired from the Rouge Valley Health System because they can’t balance their budget. This is not an isolated incident. Other hospitals are also going to be laying off staff and cutting services and beds. Premier, how can you justify the firing of these nurses?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** While the question remains unanswered from the earlier answers provided by our Premier, which is, where is that party’s specific plan in terms of how they intend to cut \$3 billion in health care—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Obviously, asking them to come forward with a list of the \$3-billion cut to health care in detail would be helpful.

In the very specific case of the Rouge Valley Health System, I can confirm that this is a hospital that has been operating beyond its level of budget. The implication, according to Rik Ganderton, the CEO, is that there may be some disruption in employment. The key thing to make note of is that it is not necessarily real people who will leave the organization. The 72-number figure—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I know this is hard for the honourable members but—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Would the member for Renfrew please take his proper seat? Thank you. Member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

1440

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Premier, you now have the longest serving health minister in the province of Ontario. Regrettably, under his watch, we now have 66% plus of the people in the province indicating in the Nanos poll that they had seen no improvement in health care. We now have a situation where this government has refused to keep their promise to hire 8,000 new nurses in their first term. In fact, you fired 757 in January 2005.

Yesterday, Premier, you said you were not going to fire nurses. Today we learn that you are. How can you justify firing nurses for a second time?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member stands in her place and is not prepared to acknowledge her record and her reputation. When they were in office, nurses were referred to as hula hoops and thousands of nurses were fired. Our record, to the contrary, as evidenced by all the data from the College of Nurses of Ontario, is that there are thousands more nurses employed in Ontario today.

On the issue of support, look to the agreement ratified recently between the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Hospital Association: the highest percentage ratification for a contract in the history of negotiations between those two parties. In the member's very own community, as a result of our intervention at the Grand River Hospital, 20 additional doctors are on site and wait times have been reduced in emergency rooms—

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

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Respect the Chair, please. Final supplementary.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our record. We hired 12,000 additional nurses.

*Interjections.*

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** We hired 12,000 more nurses. We introduced family health teams.

We have a minister today who has cut hospital beds. We have fewer beds today than we did when our government was in office. We have a minister—the facts are right here, Mr. Smitherman—who said on March 31 that Ontarians don't want to lay off nurses. Today he said to the media that it “may be a necessary evil” to balance hospital budgets.

I say to you, Mr. Smitherman, how can you justify the firing of nurses?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** In the particular instance of one hospital in Ontario, the Rouge Valley Health System, they have been operating beyond the level of their approved budget. Accordingly, consistent with the notion that we are all accountable and responsible to work within an approved volume, they are taking the

action necessary to align their budget, as all hospitals in the province are expected to.

On the issue of nursing, we are very proud to be the government that is further evolving the role of nurses, that we have a nurse-practitioner-led clinic in Sudbury and that over the course of the next several years, we will be bringing this extraordinary innovation where nurse practitioners can work together and enhance access to family health care right at the community level. Nurses are appreciated, for once, in the province—

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

## NURSES

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** A question to the Premier: Does the Premier agree with his health minister that laying off 72 nurses at Rouge Valley Health System is necessary?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think we just heard, and will hear shortly again, from the Minister of Health on this score. I think that any objective assessment would help Ontarians come to the conclusion that we have hired thousands more nurses. We're proud of the fact that they're available and working in a number of different environments.

We're hiring thousands more and, as the Minister of Health just said, we're going to take this a step further. There's going to be a new evolution in the role nurses play in Ontario. We're going to have—what do we call them?—nurse-practitioner-led clinics. That's something that has been sought for a long time on the part of nurses. We think it's time to take that step forward. We have one already in Sault Ste. Marie. We look forward to putting a few dozen more around the province.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, the College of Nurses of Ontario says that you failed to keep the promise that you made in 2003 to hire 8,000 new nurses. You fell more than 2,000 nurses short on that. The heart of the matter is this: Nurses are the very people in the health care system who make our hospitals work. If people are going to get quality care, we have to have nurses providing that care. Premier, why are you, who promised to hire more nurses, now in effect cutting patient care by firing nurses?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It's important to note again that the 72 is a reference to positions, and this does not result in a named individual leaving a hospital corporation. This is the quote from Rik Ganderton.

I think it's important to restate the facts here: Rouge Valley Health System has seen an increase of nearly \$30 million in their base budget since our government came to office. This is a substantial investment. Every hospital in Ontario has received more money, each and every year. The honourable member can make no such claims for when he was in government, nor can this party opposite. We have a hospital, Rouge Valley, that has spent beyond their approved budget. They're taking the steps

necessary, which is fair not only to the local citizens but to all the citizens across the province of Ontario.

Some 17.55 million additional hours of nursing care is what's in our party's platform as we seek to further enhance the number of nurses working in Ontario, something that neither of these parties did when they were the government.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier and the minister can repeat the promises all they wish. The fact of the matter is, 8,000 new nurses were not hired. The fact of the matter is, in an area where the population is growing, where patient load is growing, where health care needs are growing, the McGuinty government is now laying off nurses.

But it's not just there. A community-based bachelor of nursing program run out of Lakehead University in northwestern Ontario is also shutting down. Twenty-five annual graduates who are supposed to serve under-serviced communities have been told that their program is not going to operate.

I ask the Premier again, why are the McGuinty Liberals laying off nurses in the greater Toronto area and shutting down nursing programs in northwestern Ontario when you promised to hire more nurses, because, to quote the Premier, they're the heart of the hospital and health care system?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** On the issue of Lakehead, it's astonishing that a member from northwestern Ontario would be so ill-informed as to offer that information. He knows it was the absence of a post-secondary institution to support that program which has allowed it to continue. There has not been any alteration whatsoever in the resources available from our government, and the honourable member knows that very well.

He knows another thing very well. He knows that nurses are the heart and soul of health care, and he knows, through a variety of initiatives, that we've done more to enhance their standing and position than any government in a good, long time.

Some 17.55 million annual hours of care are what we will add to the extraordinary progress that we've made to date, including the implementation of the new graduate guarantee that saw 86% of program participants transitioned to full-time employment.

When they were in office, we trained nurses and then we squandered them; our government's putting them to use. And nurses in Ontario ratified, to the highest degree in their history, the recent contract between the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Hospital Association. How about—

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

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier: The Premier should note that in fact last year more nurses retired from the system than were added to the system.

But I want to ask the Premier this: Noellee Mowatt is a 19-year-old girl who is nine months pregnant, about to give birth. She has not been charged with committing a crime and has no criminal record. Why is she in jail?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Without getting too far into the circumstances of a case that is before the courts, let's just outline a few facts here. Domestic violence is a crime. It's a serious offence. This government takes the offence seriously, and this government takes the prosecution of all those offences very seriously.

1450

In circumstances in criminal offences where there is a key witness in the case, it is part of the law that the crown can apply for a material witness warrant. The police make every effort to obtain evidence through other means, but from time to time, cases need a particular witness in order to be fully and properly prosecuted. That application goes before the judge and the judge makes an independent decision, having regard to all the circumstances, including the seriousness of the allegations and the protection of the victims and parties involved.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The key part that the Attorney General tried to gloss over is that it's his agent, the crown attorney, who asked—who demanded, in this case—that a 19-year-old woman who's about to give birth, who has never been convicted of a criminal offence, who's not charged with a criminal offence, be put in jail, and she has now spent the last five nights in jail. She wants to know, what kind of a message does this send to women who are victims of abuse? What kind of message does it send when they're in fact the people who get put in jail? She says, "They're treating me like I'm a murderer ... I didn't kill anybody. I didn't do anything wrong."

Can I ask: Is putting Ms. Mowatt, the victim, in jail going to protect battered women across Ontario?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Criminal law often presents some very difficult cases and very difficult circumstances. The former Attorney General would know not necessarily to sit in his chair and second-guess the independent decisions made by a judge and a justice of the peace without knowing the circumstances around the allegations, the seriousness of the offence, the safety of the parties involved and all of the circumstances. But if the former Attorney General is suggesting that we go back to where it was when I started practising, when cases were regularly dropped without being pursued through the courts, when a simple say-so resulted in the end of a charge, when a person's not coming to court for any number of reasons resulted in cases disappearing, that places women and children in this province at far greater risk than what he is actually suggesting today.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Not only has this young woman been put in jail, but after she spoke to the media and started raising questions about why she was in jail, she was then put in solitary confinement. This is what her lawyer says: "That's not a place you want to be. They

told her it was for her own protection, but I believe it was to punish her for talking with the media.”

Yesterday, it was a 58-year-old great-grandmother who was in jail. Today, it's a 19-year-old pregnant woman who's about to give birth, who has never been convicted of an offence, who's in jail. My question is, is this the McGuinty government justice policy? When you can't get what you want by some means, jail—jail for the victim.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I think it's bordering on the outrageous that the former Attorney General plays politics with cases before the court. If he's asking me whether we'll go back to where it was when I started practising law, I say no. If he's asking me that the province should take the position of domestic violence cases that happened for a decade, the first decade I practised law, I say no—when cases were regularly thrown out if somebody phoned the police and said, “You know, I don't want to go ahead with it”; where cases were regularly thrown out when, on the first trial date, a material witness did not show up. That type of approach places victims, women, children at far greater risk.

We take domestic violence cases seriously. It is a crime. It will be prosecuted. The safety of women and children who are victims is the first priority always for this government.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** This will be my final warning to the member for Nepean—Carleton.

#### CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A question to the Premier: It appears that the harmful impact of Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies has now moved from manufacturing into the construction sector. Statistics Canada reports that gains in the total value of building permits in 10 provinces and territories were totally offset by a substantial decline here in Ontario. Excluding Ontario's results, the total value of building permits nationally would have increased by 10%. Ontario's results: Permits fell by 16%, with a 44.9% plunge in the non-residential sector. Premier, is this not the latest indication that your tax-and-spend policies are creating a Dalton McGuinty recession in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's becoming easier now to categorize the questions as either “spend” questions or “cut” questions. A moment ago, the question from the former Minister of Health, now the health critic in the Conservative Party, was telling us that we needed to do more and to spend more money to retain nurses. Now we're hearing from her colleague, who sits just a few seats away from her, that it's important for us to take \$5 billion out of government revenues. So this is now a “cut” question. We're feeling kind of whipsawed—from day to day, but within the confines of one single question period, from seat to seat. It's hard to understand where they're coming from.

We think we've got it right. We've got a plan that takes into account the need to invest in the skills and education of our workers, to invest in infrastructure, to cut taxes—and we are cutting taxes in a thoughtful, sustainable way—while at the same time, to invest in infrastructure and to support innovation. That's a thoughtful, responsible plan for the challenges created by high oil prices, a high dollar and a sluggish US economy.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Premier, you know who's being whipsawed: It's the 25,000 people who lost full-time jobs in Ontario just this past month. It's the 192,000 families that have lost well-paying manufacturing jobs thanks to your tax-and-spend policies—the people who know that Dalton McGuinty has taken Ontario from first in Confederation to dead last in job creation. That's who's whipsawed, Premier. Look further at that report. When it comes to the commercial sector, retail, office buildings, hotels—Ontario: dead last in Confederation. Institutional construction: dead last in Confederation. Industrial growth: dead last in Confederation.

To use your own words, Premier, isn't this one of those grab-you-by-the-ear moments and give them a little shake and say that something is amiss with your tax-and-spend policies here in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's back to their magic solution: It's all about taxes. If we can cut taxes to the tune of \$5 billion, then suddenly hundreds of thousands of new jobs would bloom on the Ontario landscape. I just don't see it that way. We see things differently. Taxes are an important issue, but we don't have a one-point plan as my colleagues opposite do; we've got a five-point plan. We are cutting taxes, but we're investing in the skills and education of our workers. We are partnering with the business sector. We are investing in infrastructure. We are supporting innovation. That's thoughtful, that's responsible, and I firmly believe that it will be effective.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, why did you try to keep Sandra Papatello, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd like to remind the member that we don't use names; we use ministry titles or their riding names.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question again to the Premier is: Why did he try to keep his minister's trip to China a secret from Ontarians, from Ontarian Tibetans, from the press and from the opposition?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** That's not true. Minister Papatello publicly stated that she'd be going to China in two recent speeches: to the Toronto Board of Trade—and, to the best of my understanding, that speech was delivered in public—and also to the Oshawa Chamber of Commerce.

China represents the location for many of the exports generated by Ontario manufacturers. It's a very important trading partner with us. It's not surprising at all that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would

spend some time focusing on that emerging giant and talking publicly about how important it is for us to nurture stronger trade ties.

1500

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** A question again to the Premier: The whole world is watching. Tibetans are being killed as we stand here and speak. There are relatives of those Tibetans. You're answering to them and you're answering to human rights activists around the world when you stand up and defend this trip.

So I ask you, and I ask you again: When the Minister of Economic Development and Trade goes—we don't want her to go, but if she goes—will she at least be speaking about Tibetan human rights? Will she be asking for an open border so that journalists can get to Tibet? Will she be asking for the Chinese government to sit down with His Holiness the Dalai Lama?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I am pleased to say that in the not-too-distant past I had the opportunity to sit down with the Dalai Lama. He requested that I meet with him, and I met with him.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** No, you didn't.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I can also say—the member may not be familiar with this—that for close to 40 years now, if not more than that, the federal government has had a policy of what they call constructive engagement in place, so that, for example, in 1970 Canada became the first western nation to recognize the Peoples' Republic of China. We were met with criticism at that time. Since that time, we have worked actively, as a nation, through federal governments of a variety of political stripes, to continue this dialogue and policy of constructive engagement. So the minister will be travelling to China, and she will undoubtedly find opportunities to raise all kinds of issues on behalf of Ontarians that go beyond the purview of business.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** My question is for the Minister of Labour. Last week, at midnight on March 31, 2008, the minimum wage was increased to \$8.75 an hour. This is the fifth time the McGuinty government has increased the minimum wage since taking office in 2003. When the Conservatives were in power, they froze the minimum wage the entire time they were in office. Our government takes a different approach to assisting the lowest-paid workers in Ontario, and that is widely welcomed.

Many residents in the riding of York South–Weston work in industries such as the retail sector, food production and the services sector, where the minimum wage is often the standard wage. Could the minister please clarify why our government is taking this gradual approach to increasing the minimum wage to over \$10 an hour by 2010?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to begin by thanking the member for York South–Weston, for not only her question, but her unceasing advocacy on behalf of low-

income workers across this province—not only since she's been in this place, but well before. This member has an incredible track record in that area, and I thank her for that.

The member is correct. After nine years of no increases to the minimum wage, this government has increased the minimum wage every year since we've been in office. The member is right. It has gone from \$8 to \$8.75 last week.

The key is we've done it in a balanced way, an aggressive but gradual way, to give businesses across this province the time to adjust, so that the very people we're trying to help are not put out of work by our actions. We're making a difference in the lives of low-income Ontarians through this policy and all the other policies we're doing to advocate and to try to address the problems of poverty.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I am confident that the constituents of York South–Weston welcome the increases and are definitely relieved that our government is not freezing the minimum wage for a decade like the Conservative government did, even though we are preparing for an economic slowdown. Could the minister explain what the impact of these increases is in relation to other provinces across Canada?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** One of the things that makes us, on this side of the House, very proud of our minimum wage policy is when we took office under the Tories, the minimum wage was down at the very bottom of the country. Right now, as of today, it's at the very top in Canada. We've brought the minimum wage right up to the top. But more than that, other provinces across the country are buying into our approach. They're following our approach of a gradual but aggressive increase to the minimum wage.

Ironically, even the NDP government in Manitoba agrees with us and not with their NDP cousins here in Ontario. They've rejected their policy. They're following our approach, because they know that they want to make sure they don't give low-income workers a wage increase one day and a pink slip the next. That's exactly what would happen if we were to take a reckless policy such as that advocated by the NDP.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. He has indicated that he's tired of spend-and-cut questions, so I have a question about ethics. Again, it has to do with the trip that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is taking to China.

I think the Premier knows that many Ontarians are justifiably distressed over Chinese oppression in Tibet. You also know—you said to Ontarians yourself to steel themselves for an economic slowdown and possibly a recession—that we have a crisis in manufacturing; 25,000 jobs lost just last month.

Premier, none of these approvals for overseas trips go through without your office signing off on them. Given

the tenor of the times, given what's going on in China now and what's going on in this great province, why would you approve such a trip?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Given the state of the economy, it has become all the more important that we reach out beyond our traditional trading partner, the United States of America, and look to other parts of the world. In fact, I would like to think we're building on precedents and a foundation established by governments of all political stripes.

I've got a document here, called the Ontario Business Report, published by the government in April 2001. It's very excited at the time about how the government of the day was establishing new international marketing centres to promote Ontario businesses. In fact, they were going to Shanghai to establish a business centre there. I think it's really important for my Minister of Economic Development and Trade to build on that tradition, in keeping with those precedents, to establish yet another international marketing centre, this time in Beijing.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The difference, of course, is that we were creating hundreds of thousands of new private sector jobs. The Premier is suggesting to us today that it's important to have a member of his cabinet who is responsible for the manufacturing sector in this province go to China to cut a ribbon. Essentially that's what this is all about. You know it and I know it. She is going to cut a ribbon. She's also potentially undermining Canada's position on human rights issues.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Well, I think she is, by sending out the wrong kind of message. I have to say, Premier, that this tends to confirm suspicions about your complacency about what's happening to people and communities in this province—the loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004. Once again, I ask, how in the world could you sign off on a trip like this, given the sad state of our manufacturing sector, our economy and now the housing sector, and given the oppression currently occurring in Tibet?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** A couple of things: We take our cue from the federal government. If the federal government wants to move beyond the traditional approach of constructive engagement, we will obviously take that into consideration.

But I want to quote from something the honourable Bob Runciman, then-Minister of Economic Development and Trade, said in the context of travel to Shanghai to open up a new international marketing centre: "As Ontario companies sell more to foreign markets, they make our province more competitive and our future more secure. That's why we continue to aggressively build on our global strategy.... These marketing centres will not only promote Ontario businesses but also they will build awareness of Ontario as a premier destination for investment." He was right then, and he's wrong today.

## EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier explain why his political fixer and Liberal hack, Jim Warren, received a 91% pay increase working at the lottery corporation, why Mr. Warren's salary ballooned from \$189,921.73 to \$362,371.80 in a single year? Is that level of pay appropriate when the McGuinty government holds minimum wage and vulnerable workers to the poverty line?

1510

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan:** Members opposite would know I've had opportunities, certainly, in the past year to answer plenty of questions related to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

I would say to the member that the amounts in relation to Mr. Warren relate to severance, and Mr. Warren is no longer there. The member well knows this, by the way. It was well publicized at the time. It just reflects, in the annual salary disclosure, the amount of severance, because we do want to be open and transparent with all Ontarians about all of the costs that are incurred.

I'm very happy to present this information. The member already knows it, and it's a matter of public record.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Just so everybody understands, Jim Warren was the Premier's crony who was sent to the OLGC specifically to minimize the fallout over the McGuinty government's lottery scandals. He was there a very short time, granted, but the government saw fit to give him \$173,000 on his way out the door.

Was Mr. Warren's 91% pay increase the Premier's way of rewarding a political friend for taking the lottery scandal heat for his government? And will the Premier explain why taxpayers are on the hook for this disgusting example of McGuinty pork-barrelling?

**Hon. David Caplan:** In fact, the member presents statements which are not true. Mr. Warren left the Premier's office many years before. He was recruited by then-CEO Mr. Duncan Brown. His salary and his severance reflect the contract that he signed with Mr. Brown to provide the service there.

I can assure this member and all members of this Legislature that no member of this government had, in any way, shape, or form, anything to do with the contract negotiation, the salary or the severance for Mr. Warren. I hope that settles the matter for the member.

## INVASIVE SPECIES

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

First, let me say that our budget has been fantastic news for the city of Sault Ste. Marie, as we're committing \$15 million toward the construction of a new invasive species research centre in my riding. This is an important initiative, as our government recognizes that invasive species are one of the greatest contributors to



species extinction and loss of biodiversity. Factors such as increased global trade and climate change are having profound effects on species distribution outside of their normal biological range. Invasive species are exacting a toll not only on our environment, but on our economy as well.

Minister, can you tell us how this new invasive species research centre will help protect Ontario's natural resources and improve our economy?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I'd like to say thank you to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who worked with the Canadian Forest Service, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the city of Sault Ste. Marie, along with Ministry of Natural Resources staff, on the concept for this institute.

Without question, the issue of invasive species is a very serious one for this province. Although the federal government has the lead on invasive species, all too often they take up residence in Ontario, so it makes a great deal of sense for us to work together.

Sault Ste. Marie has the type of personnel already established to continue the good work that they've been doing. The most important thing here is that we're working together in a collaborative way to address the very serious issue of invasive species in this province. Unfortunately, we've had too many in the past, and I believe that there are more to come in the future, and it is only by working together that we can make a difference. So setting up the research agency in the Soo makes imminent sense, given the personnel who are already there.

**Mr. David Orzietti:** That's another great reason that the opposition should be supporting the budget.

The new invasive species research centre affirms Sault Ste. Marie's position as a national leader in forestry research. My community already contains the largest concentration of forest researchers in the country, with CFS, the Canadian Forest Service, and OFRI, the Ontario Forest Research Institute, as well as related divisions of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Minister, it was recently mentioned in the Legislature that the emerald ash borer is an invasive species that is responsible for destroying a significant number of ash trees throughout southwestern Ontario and the northern part of the United States. As part of our government's strategy to partner with innovative companies to bring ideas to the marketplace, we supported BioForest Technologies of Sault Ste. Marie with a \$50,000 grant in 2006 to help find an effective way of combatting the emerald ash borer. The company partnered with your ministry and others to protect the environment and improve the economy.

Minister, can you elaborate on the work that's being done and conducted in partnership with your ministry to combat invasive species?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** This is truly another good example of how we can work together. Earlier this year, the ministry requested that the federal government approve a natural insecticide called TreeAzin for use against the emerald ash borer. As we've heard—and the

member from Norfolk indicated—this is a serious issue throughout the province. By monitoring over the last five years with field tests, we've supported this particular emergency application. We have received notice from Health Canada that we can in fact use this agent and it's been approved for use this year, in 2008.

TreeAzin was actually developed by Dr. Blair Helson at the Canadian Forest Service's Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie and is licensed to BioForest Technologies of Sault Ste. Marie. This is a particularly important new type of initiative because it's actually an injection into the tree and in fact will get to the fungicide that's left by the borer, and hopefully we can find a new way to address a very significant issue in this province.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** The Premier once said, "The best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour," so my question is for the Premier. Of course he also said earlier today that human rights are just a federal concern. I would then like to ask him why this government would appoint Raj Anand, the former Chief Human Rights Commissioner of Ontario, who resigned under a shroud of controversy of unorthodox hiring practices and alleged racial discrimination, to head the new Human Rights Legal Support Centre.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Once again the Tories engage in the old proverb, "A smear a day keeps the qualified away."

Raj Anand is highly qualified to be the chair of the legal support centre. Twenty years ago, allegations were made and he was cleared completely, but the member brings them up. Since that time, and before that time, he has an unblemished record in defending and promoting human rights in the province of Ontario and throughout the world. He has been recognized throughout the world for his work and he is the appropriate person to lead this very important centre as part of our transformation.

What I'd like to know is, what part of Mr. Anand's qualifications do the Tories not think justifies his appointment? Stand up and tell us.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I'll happily respond because I'm not afraid of the member opposite's rhetoric. The minister should have checked the facts. They should learn that if they don't want to be doomed to repeat history, then they should listen to the answers from before. Let's look at the facts as they played out in the last 20 years.

In 1989, it was a government review, headed by a deputy minister, that criticized Anand's management at the commission for failing to maintain records. These were the headlines of the day: Toronto Star, "Rights Commission Hiring was Flawed"; Ottawa Citizen, "Province to Investigate Rights Commission"; Globe and Mail, "Rights Agency Assailed for 'Job Rigging.'"

We've had several concerns from the public over this appointment, to top it off, back in the day. Will they suspend Mr. Anand's appointment until after an indepen-

dent, arm's-length commission once and for all clears the air on this 19-year-old controversy of Mr. Anand's management—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** She doesn't like the answer we got 20 years ago when there was a review that completely and utterly exonerated the gentleman whose name she is impugning today.

What is it about his qualifications, since he was cleared of the allegations that she wouldn't dare make outside the House? What is it about the qualifications that she doesn't like? Is it that he served as the Advocates' Society representative on the equity advisory group? Is it that he served on government-appointed boards before the human rights tribunal in the federal court challenges? Is it that he has been part of legal clinics that have served to promote and advocate for human rights? Is it that he was the winner of the Advocates' Society's highest award, the law society's highest award, or that he was the Indo-Canadian professional of the year? What part of his reputation do you want to smear tomorrow?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock.

*Interjections.*

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

1520

#### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Hier dans cette Assemblée, le ministre nous a dit : He has had between six to eight meetings in his office to talk about home care. Minister, this reasonably select number of people is not the same as a public consultation. Ontarians want their voices heard. Will the minister agree to hold an open public consultation on the new home care model?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Those six or eight meetings that I had included organizations that are representative of a really broad array of players and interested individuals at the community level.

I never pretended that I was in a position to be able to take every meeting that people might wish, but I did say to the honourable member, and I repeat to the honourable member and all today, that on this matter I'm very open to hearing from individuals through the formal means of communication, and I would encourage people who have views to let their members know, or to let me know by means of direct correspondence.

I can assure people that as I consider the options that are available in preparation for offering advice to my government, I'm really keen to hear from individuals and would encourage them to send letters or e-mails, or indeed be in touch with members of this House.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Yesterday, the minister also said that he has an obligation. His obligation is to maximize the opportunity to be aware of information that

comes from a variety of groups, and he has repeated that this afternoon.

Rather than following his own advice, the meetings are behind closed doors. Ontarians are only asking to be heard. The suggestion that you've made this afternoon to go to your MPP, to send faxes or e-mails could be a suggestion, but why won't you hold a public consultation on home care?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member asked the same question. I could offer the same answer.

At the heart of it, our foundation with respect to home care is to enhance it. More than 80,000 additional people are receiving home care services than when we first came to office. We anticipate that home care will continue to emerge as part of our health care system as a solution to some of the institutional care, and accordingly, I think that's an interesting subject to many in this House.

That's why I think it's very appropriate that members who have views on this, or are hearing views expressed by their constituents, please let me know. I will be very attentive to those concerns that are raised, as we move forward in making some alteration to the delivery of the competitive bidding processes in the province of Ontario.

#### PROCEEDS OF CRIME

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** My question is for the Attorney General. The Attorney General recently announced a civil forfeiture of a substantial amount of property in Stoney Creek and Ancaster that was found to have been used in connection with a marijuana grow operation, or found to be proceeds of that unlawful activity.

My question is whether the Attorney General can tell this House how the Civil Remedies Act is being used to protect Ontario's communities by removing the profit from unlawful activities and supporting victims.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her advocacy in ensuring that we take the profit out of crime, and she's absolutely right. That's exactly what the Civil Remedies Act does.

The Tories may not support the principle of taking profit out of crime, but we believe it's appropriate to do that, and in the community of Hamilton, we've done just that. In fact, we have taken over \$5 million out of the pockets of criminals, and we've done that in two specific instances.

In Stoney Creek, there was a property used to produce and traffic in marijuana and to steal electricity. There was also a property in Ancaster, where cash and bank accounts were found to be the proceeds of unlawful activity.

As a result of a Superior Court order, \$325,000 was forfeited to the crown. That's the profit out of crime. There's been a total of \$5 million seized under this act. It's a clear message: If you engage in criminal activity, we're going to take the profit out of crime through the Civil Remedies Act.

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** All of those who work so hard to enforce our laws in this way deserve our thanks for their efforts. I would like especially to thank Chief Brian Mullan and the Hamilton Police Service.

I'm certain that Ontarians strongly support the message that unlawful activities such as grow operations are not welcome in their neighbourhoods. Can the Attorney General tell this House how Ontario's civil forfeiture law is being used to compensate victims of the underlying unlawful activities?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** The member is absolutely right to be thanking Chief Mullan and the Hamilton Police Service for their very great work in this particular area. They're doing a great service to the people of the community and the province of Ontario.

She is also right in that the other part of this is that the grants that are taken out of the pockets of those who engage in illegal activity are used to support victims and organizations that support victims. In fact, since 2003, over \$1 million in grants have been distributed to the victims of crime and to organizations that support the victims of crime.

This is a win-win, not only for the people of Hamilton but the people of Ontario. You take the profit out of crime; you use the profits to support the very people who are aggrieved by the crime in the first place.

Thanks again to the member from Hamilton Mountain for her great work in advocacy in this regard.

#### TOBACCO INDUSTRY

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Minister of Agriculture: Last week you attended a meeting in Ottawa with your federal counterpart, a meeting that resulted in no federal dollars for farmers desperate to get out of tobacco.

Minister, you were at the table. What went wrong with these negotiations? Can you inform this House, inform farmers, residents of Brant, Oxford, Norfolk and Elgin, what Ontario's position was at that meeting at the table? Farmers do have a right to know what happened.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I couldn't agree more that farmers certainly do have the right to know. That is why I made it very clear that I wanted the farmers to be represented at the meeting, and in fact they were. I would offer that within the tobacco farming community, their representatives were there. I'm sure that they would report to their community.

The honourable member has asked what went wrong. This was a meeting that was called by the federal government. I believe that the federal government has raised expectations within the tobacco community around what might have come out of that meeting. I don't know why the federal minister didn't say more than he did. I think that was the question that the tobacco farmers came away with as well.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** What's Ontario's position?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound says, "What's Ontario's position?" What it has been for years—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** It's going to have to wait until after the supplementary.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** We do request Ontario's position. Quebec has paid out their farmers.

You've called for a special tax to help farmers out of this meltdown of the tobacco market. Your Ontario government has raised cigarette taxes a number of times since coming to office. Your government obviously likes imposing new taxes and special taxes. You do like the idea of the feds imposing a tax to help out tobacco growers. That's like you buying a car with someone else's money, Minister, but you publicly do favour a buyout.

Will you now go forward with the use of Ontario cigarette taxes to help the four counties and their farmers to get out of this mess?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I think that it's very important, first of all, to ask the member not to attribute any motive to me. I've been very clear on behalf of this government in terms of what I believe the tobacco farmers need.

Number one, I want to say that our government has provided \$50 million to tobacco farmers since coming to office. Thirty-five million of those dollars went directly into the farmers' pockets; \$15 million went to the community to help them transition to another industry.

The position of Ontario has been, is now and will continue to be that we believe, with respect to an exit strategy, it would be the users of the tobacco product and not the taxpayers of Ontario who should fund such a strategy. This does put the ball in the federal court. I think it does certainly place the expectation that any strategy would be led nationally. We support the tobacco growers in their request for that. That was certainly, in my view, made very clear at the meeting—

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

1530

#### WATER QUALITY

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Canadian Medical Association Journal reported that since 2006, Ontario had had 679 boil-water advisories. Implementing the sustainable sewage and water act was a key recommendation of the Walkerton inquiry. The act was passed in 2002. You still haven't proclaimed it. When are you going to proclaim it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Yes, we saw those numbers that were given out yesterday as well. Let me first of all say, we take the—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Very seriously.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** We take it very seriously. That's right; you're correct. We take the testing of our water very seriously, and I can tell you that it's out of a sense of precaution that all these steps are taking place.

The numbers that were actually tested last year are, relatively speaking, no higher than any other year, but as

a result of all the recommendations that were put into place from the Walkerton inquiry, basically we've got the statistics now to a much higher degree than we ever had before.

We take it seriously. We want to make sure that it's a precautionary approach. Sometimes these situations only last for a few days; sometimes longer than that. There's no question that in the long run a lot of the water systems will have to be improved. Through the grant programs that have been ongoing through this government over the last five years, we're doing that on a consistent basis.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** In 2002 that act was adopted. You still haven't proclaimed it. I don't see that as any sign of serious gravity, any taking of this in the way it has to be taken. When will you proclaim the act?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** That will happen in due course.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of my constituents from the Orono United Church, Port Perry/Prince Albert Pastoral Charge and many other congregations in the riding of Durham. There are hundreds coming in daily. The petition reads as follows:

"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 Ontario Legislature; and

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

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of 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, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to present this, sign it and support it and present it to Adam, one of the new pages.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Kitchener–Waterloo.

"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 fully support this petition, affix my name to it, and will be giving it to page Bethany.

### PUBLIC WASHROOMS

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I have a petition here signed by members of the Fir Valley community and headed up by Mr. Sonny Sansone.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"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;

"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 Michael, who is here with me today.

### GREEN SPACE

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition here signed by a great number of my constituents in Oxford county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Burgess Park is an undeveloped, provincially owned area of natural forest and meadows,

adjacent to the Thames River in Woodstock, which is managed by the city of Woodstock through an agreement with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority; and

“Whereas Burgess Park is one of the last remaining significant natural areas within the historical city boundaries, within walking distance of downtown and most residents, and with a connection to the other green and open spaces in the city; and

“Whereas this land is now threatened by the city’s decision to allow a land lease for a golf course expansion on the property; and

“Whereas since 1946, the mandate of conservation authorities in Ontario has been defined in section 20 of the provincial Conservation Authorities Act as ‘to establish and undertake, in the area in which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources ...’

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

“Please protect the integrity of the few significant green spaces left in the city of Woodstock so that we can maintain a natural corridor through our city. Please ensure that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority adheres to their legislated mandate. Do not allow these parks and conservation lands to be commercially developed. We need to protect first, restore second and keep what exists. Once it is gone it will never come back.”

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

#### DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

“We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act.”

I want to thank the Bikers Rights Organization and Michael Warren for furnishing these petitions to me. I affix my signature.

#### LORD’S PRAYER

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** This petition is titled “Don’t Remove the Lord’s Prayer.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current McGuinty 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 parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John 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 of 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, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I affix my signature to these petitions.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I have a petition in support of Bill 11, “Children and Smoke-Free Cars”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

“Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

“Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support ‘legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present’; and

“Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under.”

I sign this petition and support it.

1540

#### LORD’S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, sent to me by Faith Seibold from Owen Sound, Ontario.

“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; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of 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, 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, and I’m going to give it to Jordynne.

#### HIGHWAY 17

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition from constituents of Rockland, Cumberland, Vankleek Hill and Hawkesbury.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the past government of Ontario transferred the responsibility for Highway 17 to the municipalities, the city of Ottawa and the united counties of Prescott and Russell; ...

“Whereas in 2001, the administration of the united counties of Prescott and Russell estimated the circulation of 21,000 vehicles per day during the week as you enter the city limits of Clarence-Rockland on 17, and has since reached 25,000; ...

“Whereas the MTO regional staff had recommended and accepted, as presented by the management review board on April 27, 1992, that Highway 17 east of Ottawa be retained as a provincial collector highway following completion of Highway 417; ...

“Whereas the eastern Ontario population demands the same road security services;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation hereby take back the responsibility of Highway 17/174 or give provincial funding for its widening from the city of Clarence-Rockland to the city of Ottawa.”

I have also signed this petition.

#### LORD’S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition that was sent to me by Dave McIntyre, from RR1, Priceville, in my riding. These petitions come from all over the riding. The last one was from Owen Sound; this one is from Priceville.

“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”—I know there are other people who would like to get one on, so I’ll just read the last part of it:

“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 also signed it.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I have a petition here from the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre that I’m happy to read and present to the House. 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’ll sign it and have Bethany deliver it to the table.

#### LORD’S PRAYER

**Mr. John O’Toole:** I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham—and I’m actually receiving a number of these every single day. Out of respect, I’ll present it. It reads as follows:

“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 Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of 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, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Michael on behalf of my constituents.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was sent to me by a number of residents of Mississauga, Brampton and Burlington. 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'm pleased to affix my signature to support the petition and to ask page Marco to carry it for me.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Before I call for the orders of the day, I have to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parkdale-High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning the planned trip to China of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. This matter will be debated today, I understand, at 6 p.m.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008

##### LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and

other matters / Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** It gives me great pleasure to speak about our budget that's before the House that was presented by our finance minister a week or so ago. I tell you, the comments I hear from folks around the province, but particularly in the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West where I have eight municipalities and one county level of government, it's very encouraging and really reinforces what this government is all about: working together with the community, investing in infrastructure both within the municipality and the public sector, but also working with industry and the education sector.

I guess I can spend the next 10 minutes or so that I'm allotted to speak about my thoughts on the budget, as I indicated a minute ago, but rather than do that, I'm just going to take some time to quote some of the newspaper reporting, quotes from some mayors and some leaders in the community and indeed some of the editorials from some of the many newspapers that cover my riding.

1550

Let me begin. For example, part of the MIII—and these are in no particular order, but it's all related to the budget. The municipality of Brighton, which is where I hail from, as part of Northumberland county, received the \$1 million they applied for, for a much-needed expansion of their arena, adding washrooms and a recreational complex. They applied for \$1 million towards a \$2-million-or-so expansion, and it was awarded. Here's the quote from Mayor Chris Herrington, a good mayor from the municipality of Brighton: "We're thrilled with the province's \$1-million investment in this project and look forward to moving ahead with this expansion." The message I got from the municipality is that if they weren't successful, the project would probably be held up, because certainly, these municipalities have other priorities. I can tell you, back in my days as mayor of that great municipality, going back some five years, that project was on the table then. That just could not be done because there were other priorities.

My good friend the mayor of Trent Hills, Hector Macmillan—I wish I could show you a picture of him and his CAO on the day they found out that they got \$1.4 million to spend on roads and bridges. I'll just quote from the paper: "Trent Hills mayor Hector Macmillan and CAO Mike Rutter just couldn't get that smile off their faces this week," after they heard the announcement. I tell you, in a municipality with some 13,000, 14,000 people, very rural—it's got over 500 kilometres of roads and a number of bridges—that \$1.4 million goes a long way.

Another quote from Brighton's *The Independent*: "Savers and home-owning seniors were among the winners"—of this budget—"while the county's bid for blanket broadband coverage was also boosted by a commitment to spend \$30 million over the next four years by

providing high speed Internet access to rural southern Ontario." This is a good investment.

I had two post-budget breakfasts that the chambers hosted, one in the eastern part of the riding, in the great city of Quinte West, with the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, and the other the day after, in Port Hope, a joint breakfast with the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce and the Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce. The mayor of Brighton is also the warden of the county, and it reads: "Northumberland county gets \$2,004,780, and County Warden Christine Herrington described the money as 'much needed,'" to deal with their budgetary pressures.

Another quote from Mayor Macmillan of the city of Trent Hills, whom I just spoke about a few minutes ago: "Mr. Macmillan noted that the construction program, both in the county and across the province, will provide an economic boost as well as improving the transportation routes in Northumberland." So it's a win-win.

I'm particularly proud that two days after the budget, as I mentioned before, I was a guest speaker, talking to business leaders, municipal leaders and chamber members from the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce and the Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce when they held a joint breakfast in Port Hope. I'll just read this quote from the paper. I think I mentioned this once before in this House. It reads: "From farmers to Northumberland county politicians, it was a bit of a lovefest at Thursday's joint Northumberland central and Port Hope and district chambers of commerce post-provincial budget breakfast as people thanked Northumberland-Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi for a variety of provincial budget windfalls affecting rural and small-town Ontario."

I'll carry on with the same article. A well-respected farmer in our community of Port Hope, Northumberland Federation of Agriculture representative John Boughen, one of the biggest farmers in my riding, attended the breakfast. Here's what it says: "He welcomed the \$56-million for the Pick Ontario Freshness Strategy and the same amount of funding for animal husbandry research at the University of Guelph and for the Ontario Veterinary College, as well as expanding the land transfer tax exemption to include transfers from family farm corporations to individual family members."

He went on, and I won't read his whole quote, just another paragraph: "He thanked the province for its previous risk management monies and criticized the federal government for not coming through with its 60% share on the program."

A business person at the same meeting, Dave Strong from Ward 2, which is a mostly rural part of Port Hope: "He was encouraged the budget included \$30 million over four years to bring faster Internet service to this part of Ontario."

I'll carry on with these quotes. The day after the budget there was an editorial in the Cobourg Daily Star. The headline sort of encapsulates the editorial: "Something for Farmers, Seniors, Students, Unemployed." That

really tells about the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West and the majority of Ontario.

Let me read another quote from that editorial: "Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty can" yell "all he wants about cutting corporate taxes. There is no evidence that a few percentage points of difference have driven industry wholesale from Ontario to some other jurisdiction. Other major market factors, over which the provincial Liberals are not masters, have done that."

These are not my words. These are words that are coming from my community.

Another quote from Warden Chris Herrington about MIII—the county was able to get roughly \$800,000 to rebuild part of former Highway 2, which was down-loaded by the previous government and now it's a county road. "The dollars announced today to allow us to rehabilitate this stretch of County Road 2 are very much appreciated." There was no pork-barrelling, like the opposition will tell you. It's a real shame that they take that attitude.

My good friend Mayor Mark Lovshin from the township of Hamilton said, "It's nice to put some money back into the community." The arena project, which they got the MIII funding for, surely enhances that community in the beautiful municipality of Hamilton township.

"Port Hope Chief Administrative Officer Carl Cannon said the municipality is also pleased to see a four-year, \$80-million Eastern Ontario development fund included in the recent budget." It was part of this budget, and I'll tell you, the folks in eastern Ontario are going to be delighted. They had a similar program some seven, eight or maybe 10 years ago, and it was taken away. It was something, but whatever it was, it got taken away, and what the federal government came forward with for eastern Ontario is only half of what the province is doing. So I'm delighted to mention that, because it's very, very important for eastern Ontario.

Let me tell you what the Trenton Trentonian, in the municipality of Quinte West, said: "Municipalities, including Quinte West, had been demanding more money in Tuesday's provincial budget for broken bridges, roads, water and sewer mains."

The mayor and city officials said the province delivered.

#### 1600

I carry on. Councillor Jim Harrison is also the past chair of the Ontario Good Roads Association. "He said the provincial budget addressed a lot of the association's concerns." So this goes beyond the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West.

"I'm quite pleased they committed another \$400 million for rural Ontario," Councillor Harrison said.

Mayor Williams of Quinte West "said the one-time funding of \$1.7 million in the provincial budget and the funding application of \$400,000 gives the city more leverage in capital works being completed in 2008.

"It's great news for the city and we can move forward with other projects," said Williams."



Most municipalities—Mr. Speaker, as you know, some of us had the pleasure of serving on those councils. The needs were there greatly, and what I can tell you is, this was really, really appreciated.

I think my time has come to a close, but I just want to give a small quote.

“But the strong point of the budget, says Quinte ... economic development manager Chris King,” is not just about a tax cut; it’s about job training. These folks in the trenches know how important that is.

Chris goes on: “‘We weren’t expecting big corporate tax relief,’ said King. ‘But there is more support for local manufacturers. Tax relief is only part of the bigger picture.’”

So, as you can see from municipal leaders to business leaders in my community—I believe this was a great budget. I certainly hope that we can get it passed so that we can implement all those budget measures that were there.

I could go on for hours, but I’m going to end it there.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I’m pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Quinte West. He started out by talking about and highlighting some of the municipal spending in the budget. Certainly, any municipality is happy to receive money, but part of the problem with the money being handed out, especially through the MIII fund, is that it is a competitive process.

Municipalities are happy to receive money in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. We have some 26 municipalities. There were five that were successful and 21 unsuccessful. For each of the applications in this competitive process, they have to hire engineers; there’s expense involved. Gravenhurst has applied four times to various programs for some very-much-needed roadwork and has been unsuccessful every time. So I think what municipalities would like to see is reliable, plannable funding, like a share of the gas tax, which is what the federal government sends to municipalities. Then they can plan; they know how much revenue they have coming in.

This budget that we’ve just had introduced recently is a typical Liberal tax-and-spend budget. It’s \$96.7 billion, and what have we got? We’ve got more debt in the province of Ontario. The Ontario debt is now up to \$167.7 billion. That means that we’re paying a million dollars an hour, or \$9 billion a year, on interest to service the debt which has been added to by this government. Spending is up 48% in Ontario since this Liberal government has come to power—48%. When you read the papers and see that building permits in the last month are down 16%, and the jobless rate—we lost 24,000 jobs, I believe, in the last month. I call this budget anything but prudent when we have economic storm clouds on the horizon.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I rise to comment on the speech made by my friend from Northumberland–Quinte West. I listened intently as he quoted from a number of news-

paper articles and a number of mayors lauding what was done. Of course, anyone is going to say that this was a good budget if they got something out of it. Of course the municipality that got \$1 million to build a bridge is going to say, “Thank you for the \$1 million for letting us build the bridge.” Of course the municipality that got some money to repair a road is going to say, “Thank you very much for the money to repair the road.” These are all very polite people, and I expect nothing more or less from them but to say thank you when a gift is given to them like that.

I also went to the Good Roads conference along with my friend; I saw him there. I saw the mayors and reeves and the assorted other people falling all over themselves trying to find some money for their municipality. One should not expect any less from a municipal government. One should not expect any less from a councillor or a mayor or a reeve but to try to get some more money to staunch the decay that is in so many Ontario towns.

But what my friend did not talk about is all the people who have been left out of the budget. He didn’t read out thank-you letters from those people on ODSP, who are going to get a lousy 2%, and then only in the last quarter of the year. He didn’t read out thank-you letters from people who have been completely ignored in this budget, municipalities that have been ignored. He didn’t read out thank-you letters from all of the people who I think were disappointed that there wasn’t even a single word about daycare, about child care in the budget. No money spent on new homes in the budget: You didn’t get any letters from people thanking you for that.

So I take it all with a grain of salt. You’ve made some people happy, and they thanked you as polite people will do, but you’ve made many, many more angry, of which you do not want to talk.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I’m pleased to have a few minutes this afternoon to add to this debate. I certainly want to commend and thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his advocacy for the people in his riding, especially with the eastern Ontario economic development fund. I want to say thank you for your leadership there and for your encouragement to all of us who represent those rural ridings of eastern Ontario. It’s certainly going to be a great help.

The member spoke with passion about the communities in his riding, and he’s speaking from experience. He knows what it has been like to serve on municipal councils, and the wants and the wishes of those municipalities over the years. I, too, served for 14 years on municipal councils. I know that they had long lists of projects that if they just had that wee bit of help, they could move some of those projects along. We made that happen. I’m delighted that we had \$400 million in the budget to allocate to getting that out into the province and rolling it out.

I too hosted a post-budget breakfast on the Friday. I received comments from municipal leaders with regard to that allocation and also with the MIII allocations that were received. People like Charles Barkley, mayor of

South Dundas, couldn't have been more happy, because he was at the post-budget—we had post-budget hearings in the riding. The minister was down, and Charles Barkley made comments about that, that here was a government that was listening, and he hoped that the minister was there to listen for the other things that he was looking for. Certainly municipal infrastructure was on his lips, and the same with Bryan McGillis, the mayor of South Stormont. He too was at that meeting. They all had these lists, and I'm glad that we had a government that listened with \$400 million.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I would like to comment on the member from Northumberland–Quinte West's comments on the budget and the act.

I was at the Ontario Good Roads Association too, and I heard a number of comments from municipal leaders. At one of the meetings I sat in on, in expressing their remarks to myself and a number of other members who were holding information sessions, a comment was made that they felt like a number of salivating dogs waiting for a bone or a morsel to be thrown to them every year when they came cap in hand to the provincial government, to the different ministries, looking for handouts.

I didn't think that was a very good way that our municipal leaders have to feel when they come down there, to echo comments made by other members, who are just glad to get these dollars to complete projects that are well deserving and have been on the drawing boards for a long time. But when he said that he felt like a salivating dog, I felt that it was an awful comment that a municipal leader elected by his fellow peers and members of the community had to go cap in hand and feel in that respect.

On this side of the House, we feel that the government is on the wrong track. We're on the road to 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost; hardships in many communities with layoffs just announced in the House today; firing nurses in different hospitals in the Toronto area—Brampton area, I guess it was. I think we need to get the tax rates right.

One of the things we called on was to accelerate plans announced in the fall economic statement and eliminate the capital tax for all businesses immediately, to reduce the regulatory requirements on all businesses, and to give hard-working Ontarians and seniors a tax break. I think that will go a long way to improving this economy and getting Ontario back on the right track.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West, who has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I want to thank my colleagues the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Beaches–East York, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and for Sarnia–Lambton.

I am not surprised by some of the comments from the members of the opposition. I guess it's to be expected, but I think some of them have a very, very short memory because I, like my friend from Stormont–Dundas–South

Glengarry, was in municipal government when both of those parties had the opportunity to serve as a government for the province of Ontario. I need to remind them that they also handed things down. But as municipal leaders of that day, we weren't so grateful.

We got handed down highways.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** Highway 2.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Highway 2. Highway 28. Highway 30. What a short memory. They did hand things down. But as mayor of the municipality of Brighton, I wasn't very appreciative. I wasn't thanking them. When my friend from Beaches–East York says that, yes, there was only one time—they also handed things down. As reeve of Brighton township in that day, our staff had to lose days in order to accommodate their social contract. They weren't saying thank you. I guess my friend from Sarnia–Lambton—I know he's new to this place, but I know he has a lot of experience. They keep on saying we're on the wrong track. Well, the only track they know is to cut taxes.

All he's got to check is the records from the two terms of government served previously to this government. What did they do when they cut taxes? We find Ontario in the mess that we are in today, from which we are trying to recuperate. So they did hand things down, but I certainly wasn't thanking them that day like the municipal leaders are thanking this government today.

I appreciate their comments. I would expect nothing different from them, but I think the people of Ontario have spoken loud and clear. Hopefully, we can get through this debate process and get this budget passed so that we can all have the benefit from it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Further debate?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I am pleased to comment on Bill 44, a.k.a. the budget bill. I remind the table that this is the lead, on behalf of the official opposition, for my speech. We had deferred the lead on Monday night, so the clock should indicate 60 minutes, as opposed to 20. I thank the table for that.

My friend from Northumberland—I always enjoy his remarks. When I refer to the member, I know I'm not supposed to use his name; I can call him Sweet Lou once in a while, so I call him the sweet member from Northumberland. A nice enough fellow, but as we heard from his comments, hopelessly misguided in many senses in terms of appraising an Ontario budget that does nothing to stop the decline in the economic indicators, really, across the board.

I'll talk a bit about that in my comments, particularly, I guess, in the set-up to the situation that the finance minister and the Premier would have found themselves in as they prepared the 2008-09 budget not too long ago.

If my colleague from Northumberland is so excited about Highway 2 and other highways he mentioned, I would assume that he would have uploaded them to the provincial government by now. After all, the McGuinty government has increased spending precipitously, \$20-some-billion more in spending. So if these were real

priorities, I assume that would have taken place. I'll look through the budget closely, but I didn't see any news about Highway 2 in this recent budget.

I did see some members opposite get their backs up a little bit with the Northumberland member's harsh comments about the former Liberal Premier of the province, Bob Rae. Of course, Bob Rae, one of the leaders in the federal Liberal Party—he's recently taken a seat there—had a lot of backing from members opposite in his recent leadership bid. I know that they're sensitive to some of the criticisms of Bob Rae and his policies. Maybe the Northumberland representative has not read the briefing book on that yet, but he certainly wouldn't want somebody like the health minister to be mad at him for his harsh criticisms of Bob Rae's time in office as the last Liberal Premier.

Before I get into specific comments on Bill 44 itself, let me talk a little bit about the state of the economy, the situation that Finance Minister Duncan and Premier McGuinty found themselves in as they were preparing the 2008-09 budget. I'll refer you to a story from CanWest News Service, Tuesday, March 25, 2008, about the state of the economy. The headline: "Ontario Heading for Recession this Year: Desjardins." The article says: "Ontario will be pushed into a recession this year by a slump in the US economy, a Canadian financial institution warned Tuesday in advance of the release of that province's annual budget."

Yves St-Maurice, the deputy chief economist at Desjardins Group, said this in their release on the latest global and domestic forecast: "[Ontario] is more dependent on international exports than Quebec is, and will not be able to avoid a drop in production in the first two quarters of 2008." In summary, he said, "Technically, therefore, Ontario will be in a recession in the early part of the year."

We also saw that TD had come out with a report—maybe I'll get to that in a little bit—forecasting that Ontario's growth would be a paltry 0.5%: barely moving forward; crawling. I remind you that in the Desjardins report, in the TD report or in the Royal Bank of Canada's recent report, it's eye-opening how far Ontario has dropped from its historic position as a leader of economic growth and job creation in Confederation.

The Royal Bank of Canada just this past month put out their own economic analysis. They go through province by province. When you look at the variance in how the provinces are described vis-à-vis Ontario, you would think that would have given the finance minister or the Premier pause and caused them to re-evaluate their five years of runaway spending and high taxes that have brought Ontario to the "brink of recession," according to RBC's report; that's the term they use.

Let me give you some examples. Saskatchewan's headline is "The New Provincial Growth Leader." That will come as no surprise to the mayor of Windsor, Eddie Francis, who has recently been in discussions with western provinces like Saskatchewan on flying Windsor workers from Windsor to the western provinces and then

trying to get them back with their families to spend time. You can't blame the mayor for trying to assist his residents, as best as possible, to keep them in the community—Windsor now with, sadly, one of the highest unemployment rates in all of Canada, let alone the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** They call it Air Duncan.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My friend from Sarnia-Lambton says accurately that they call it Air Duncan in southwestern Ontario. It's appropriate because it's the finance minister's policies, approved by Premier McGuinty, that have driven almost 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs from our province. It's ironic that the community from which the finance minister and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade both hail, Windsor, has suggested flying people from their community to the west coast to find work. So my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton is right in coining that Air Duncan.

Where was I? Saskatchewan, the new provincial growth leader—RBC says, "We expect Saskatchewan to be Canada's top growth performer this year, coming in at 3.6% in 2008 and 3.2% in 2009.... Saskatchewan now ranks number one across all key housing indicators that we track."

You may recall that it was the previous—believe it or not—NDP government in the province of Saskatchewan that reduced tax rates. Saskatchewan had been the province that had the highest rate of taxation on business investment in Canada. In fact, I believe Saskatchewan was the jurisdiction in North America that had the highest rate of taxation on business investment. It was the New Democratic government in the province of Saskatchewan that lowered that tax burden to try to attract new business investment—existing businesses to expand, new businesses to move to Saskatchewan.

Currently, the Saskatchewan Party is in office, Premier Wall continuing those policies and making sure that Saskatchewan is attractive to business investment. Now you can see the success. It's predicted by RBC to be number one in growth in Canada, in large part due to much more sensible fiscal policies. On Manitoba, RBC says, "A new hot spot? Manitoba likely reported another solid year of growth and is expected to continue to outperform the national average."

**1620**

It's interesting that when the Premier is keen to offer all kinds of excuses as to the state of the province of Ontario, he likes to point the finger of blame at George Bush and the States. He likes to point the finger of blame at the government in Seoul, South Korea. He likes to point the finger of blame on a regular basis at Ottawa.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** He doesn't own a mirror.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** In fact, Dalton McGuinty has pointed to so many factors for the decline in Ontario's economy that he's run out of fingers and now has to start using his toes.

The one thing he has failed to do is to point a finger solidly at his own chest and examine his tax-and-spend policies that have brought Ontario from number one in

growth to the back of the pack in Confederation. My friend for Sarnia–Lambton notes that Dalton McGuinty must not have a mirror, since he does not seem to recognize that his own policies, beginning with the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario, have had an impact on our job creation.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba are doing very well, while British Columbia and Alberta are moving ahead. You get to Ontario in the RBC report and the headline—unlike Manitoba, “A new hotspot?,” and unlike Saskatchewan, “The new provincial growth leader”—says, “Ontario—On the brink of recession.”

Royal Bank of Canada’s economic report April 2008: “Ontario—On the brink of recession.”

Let me read a bit further into RBC’s report. “Further evidence of a slowdown is showing up in the province’s labour markets. Digging beneath the headline numbers, Ontario’s job market resilience now appears overstated. The year-long trend shows that the public sector has been doing the heavy lifting, while the private sector is in contraction, with declines in key sectors including forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.” It’s kind of across the board. That’s hitting on large parts of our economy: “forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.”

We certainly know that the manufacturing sector has had a major contraction. I think Dalton McGuinty at one point in time described it as “a minor contraction” to try to tamp down some media speculation. The reality is a major contraction in our manufacturing sector. My colleague from Halton, our economic development and trade critic, Ted Chudleigh, keeps a running total of manufacturing job losses and keeps us updated. Hopefully, the Premier is seeing some of these reports because he seems rather oblivious to it. But Mr. Chudleigh will report that 192,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have left our province under the last couple of years of the McGuinty government, so we knew the manufacturing sector was in trouble.

RBC raises some very alarming concerns about the private sector in a broad-based sense: “contraction,” with declines in “forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.” You may recall as well the question I asked earlier today. One of the strengths in the province of Ontario that was spurred on by the reforms of the Mike Harris-PC government has been the housing sector: reforms on the labour side, reforms on the land development side, reforms on reducing the tax burden and energizing our province.

By the way, to remind folks again, it helped to create over one million net new jobs in the province of Ontario, at a time when Ontario was number one in job creation in North America. The construction sector was one of the booms and maintained that boom for some time. But the same sort of slowdown we’ve seen in manufacturing, the same sort of slowdown that RBC points out in their April report, has been picked up by Stats Canada in their

release detailing building permits for February 2008. I think it just came out yesterday.

The Globe and Mail covered it on page B5, the business section, where they said, in a headline, “Inactivity in Ontario Fuels Another Drop in Building Permits.”

Statistics Canada notes, rather interestingly, that if Ontario were excluded, the total value of building permits nationally would have increased 9.8%. So basically a 10% increase in the value of building permits across Canada, excluding Ontario.

When you throw in the dramatic decline in the province of Ontario, Canada’s numbers as a whole go down 1%. So you go from a 10% gain, you throw in Ontario’s lacklustre economy—thanks to Dalton McGuinty’s tax-and-spend policies—and you end up with a one-point drop across Canada.

“Permits in Ontario fell 16% to \$2 billion, with a 44.9% plunge in the non-residential sector inflicting the damage.

“This is pretty ugly for Ontario,” said Don Drummond, chief economist at Toronto Dominion Bank.” He went on to say in the article: “The manufacturing is easy enough to understand, but you have the fall-off in shopping centres ... it does suggest that this could be the start of a trend.”

Let me explain Mr. Drummond’s comments on the shopping centres a bit more.

Statistic Canada’s report, on page 3, goes into greater detail about Ontario’s building permit plunge. I know my colleagues opposite will have time for rebuttal, and if they can explain a different viewpoint on Statistic Canada’s latest report, I look forward to that. I certainly hope there is better news in the provincial economy, but Statistic Canada’s report, when it comes to building permits, paints a rather unfortunate picture.

Non-residential building permits are divided into three categories: institutional, commercial and industrial. Across Canada, “the institutional component plunged 35.7% ... the lowest level since April 2007,” again from the report. “The decline was spread across various types of buildings (schools, medical buildings, administrative buildings, nursing homes).” Well, certainly no nursing homes in the province of Ontario. I don’t know if the Liberals have actually built any new nursing homes despite growing waiting lists—certainly a record that has been harshly criticized by those who work in the long-term-care sector. “Overall, seven provinces posted declines, with the largest in Ontario, Alberta and Quebec.

“In the commercial component,” which Mr. Drummond references in the Globe and Mail article, “the value of permits fell 16.2% to \$1.2 billion, largely the result of a significant decline in projects for office buildings and hotels. It was the second-lowest level over the last 12 months.” Notably, Statistics Canada reports that, “Again, Ontario recorded by far the largest share of this decrease....

“On the industrial side”—sadly, no surprise—“the value of permits plunged 39.4% ... the lowest level since March 2006.... Significant declines in projects for manu-

facturing buildings in Ontario and utility buildings in Alberta were behind these results. In Ontario, the value of industrial permits hit its lowest level since April 2005.”

Generally, even if the economy were crawling along at 0.05%, as the TD suggests it is, you'd expect at least the value of permits to continue and increase; maybe not at the rates they experienced under the previous PC government, but you'd think they would increase. But in fact, no, we're seeing that in Ontario the value of industrial permits is in decline, going back down to levels experienced three years ago, April 2005.

On the housing side, the residential side, the report indicates that “the number of residential units approved has been on a downward trend since ... the summer 2007.”

Holy smokes. We know the manufacturing sector is in trouble in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. His policies of increasing taxes to the highest level in all of North America have had an impact. Certainly, Dalton McGuinty's policies of restraining our energy supply and creating an enormous energy bureaucracy have caused our energy rates to increase.

There is also concern about future energy products coming on-stream and closing the gap that's going to exist ahead of us, which I think also motivates business decisions against the province of Ontario.

As was reported at our finance committee—my colleagues who were on that committee will probably recall—Ontario now has the second-highest energy rates among competing states and provinces. Energy had always been one of our strengths. Coming from Niagara, I can tell you that, with the great natural resource of Niagara Falls and Beck generating projects, fuelled by the Welland River, which goes through my community of Wellandport. We've always known in Ontario that we had a major strength in energy supply: competitive prices which helped to fuel our manufacturing boom through most of the last century. Dalton McGuinty's policies of restricting our energy supply, throwing up all kinds of red tape and causing a gigantic increase—in fact, I may even say gargantuan—in energy bureaucracy have given great pause to investments in the manufacturing sector and helped to fuel the decline.

**1630**

We also know that nobody can roll out the red tape like Premier McGuinty. He did make some promises in that regard but, like so many of his promises made in 2003, they went out the window as soon as he received the keys to the Premier's limousine. I don't have them in hand—I should bring them back up in the House sometime—but the ratio of regulations removed, compared to the regulations that have been added on to the back of entrepreneurs, businesses, and municipalities, is absolutely astounding. I think the cabinet ministers must spend three quarters of their time approving new regulations, when you see the piles of red tape that have now spooled out of the cabinet office.

These factors and more are contributing to the manufacturing decline. We knew that was taking place. We've seen—my friend from Halton will show you—192,000 manufacturing jobs, well-paying manufacturing jobs, now gone from the province of Ontario. Construction had always been a strength, bursting on the flames of the growth through the mid- to late 1990s, early 2000s.

Now, according to Statistics Canada, some alarming things are happening in the housing sector. You would expect that the same information RBC would have, that TD would have, the Stats Canada information, would come to the finance minister's office, would come to the office of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and would come, presumably, to the Premier's office directly or through those two sources. So you would expect that some flags would have been raised about the state of the economy. The possibility, the growing possibility, I say to my friend from Pickering-Ajax, of a Dalton McGuinty recession—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** —sorry, Pickering-Scarborough East, thank you; new riding boundaries, and this is Ajax-Pickering. Pickering has strong representation in the Legislature this evening. But they would both know, Ajax-Pickering and Pickering-Scarborough East, that we have a strong and growing possibility of a Dalton McGuinty recession here in Ontario. So you would have expected a change in the approach of the McGuinty government in their fifth budget. You would have expected this document, the Ontario Budget 2008, to diverge from what we've seen in the first four years of Dalton McGuinty, which has been moving the province from a competitive jurisdiction to one that has the highest rate of business taxation in all of Canada.

We have seen a spending increase in program spending precipitously, and as you heard in question period today, we're not sure with what results, aside from growing the size of the bureaucracy and increasing the number of government workers making more than \$100,000 per year, significantly. But otherwise it is hard to point out those results. So you would expect that we would have seen some restraint on the rapid expansion of government, some better understanding of the state of our economy and some effort to lower the tax burden on businesses, working families and seniors; some effort to lower the red tape burden faced by businesses that has throttled entrepreneurship and innovation in Ontario; some effort to increase our energy supply to make Ontario attractive again for manufacturing. But, sadly, in these 166 pages of the 2008 budget it's very difficult to find initiatives that will address any of those goals.

I'll move on from the RBC report. I think you get the picture. Desjardins, RBC, TD, Statistics Canada are all painting a picture of a province that is facing significant economic challenges: a growing potential of a Dalton McGuinty recession here in Ontario and no initiatives in the budget to change that. In fact, we see a continuation of the tried-and-true Dalton McGuinty path of runaway spending and higher taxes.

I've had the pleasure of sitting on the finance committee for some time as the critic. We have a couple of outstanding members, and I'll make sure the new riding names are correct: Wellington–Halton Hills—you may have heard of him, Mr. Speaker—a hardworking member, and despite his obvious-looking young age, a veteran of the Ontario Legislature; also, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. They're our two members on the finance committee and they've done an outstanding job. It's a pleasure to serve with them as the finance critic.

Members like Wellington–Halton Hills and Haldimand–Norfolk, among others, have been calling for some time on the McGuinty government to re-examine the recklessness of their tax-and-spend ways and the impact it would have on our provincial economy. We see now the accumulation of the past five years, where the misguided economic policies have eroded Ontario's once highly competitive position.

To make sure you know that it's not just me who says this, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute, CFIB and the chamber of commerce will point this out. This one is from the C.D. Howe Institute: "Ontario has the least competitive business tax structure in all of Canada." When you combine a relatively high provincial corporate income tax rate, the capital tax, the sales tax on capital goods and the inputs in the process, Ontario has the highest tax rate on new business investment of all 10 provinces.

As I mentioned, high energy prices are another significant competitive disadvantage. They're central to significant job losses in both the manufacturing and forestry sectors. Let's put this in perspective again. The growth that we experienced in 2007—and if I recall correctly, Ontario was last or second from last in growth in job creation in 2007 under the McGuinty government—is the slowest rate of growth we've seen in the province of Ontario since the 1991 recession. Bob Rae was Premier. The projections of the banks are indicating that 2008 will have an even slower rate of growth. As I said, TD had half a per cent. Four of the five major banks rank Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces in terms of economic growth for 2008. We're the only province that has experienced a decline in manufacturing sales since 2003. So you would expect some admission of this. You would expect some action in the Ontario budget to try to reverse that decline.

Let me put it in perspective this way. We've always known an Ontario that has led Canada, that has been the engine of growth for the entire country, a place where folks would come from British Columbia, Newfoundland and Manitoba to work, to raise a family, to buy a home; a source of well-paying jobs, a strong economy, a place you could have a lot of confidence. Ontario under Dalton McGuinty is, believe it or not, sliding into have-not status. I know it's shocking. Right? It's shocking. We've always known that Ontario was one of the leaders that would share some of its wealth with the other provinces to try to bring them up. Saskatchewan used to be a have-not province, now it's a "have" province and leading

Canada in growth. Ontario under the McGuinty government is in jeopardy of becoming a have-not province. I hope I hear one of the government members in the debate over Bill 44 at least admit that and raise some concern. Instead, we hear this sort of Bobby McFerrin bad version of "Don't Worry, Be Happy": "Steel yourselves, don't panic"—whatever the latest line of the day is that comes from Premier McGuinty.

"Don't panic": By the way, isn't that one of the things from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy? I think that was a famous line. First thing: "Don't Panic." When it comes to the state of Ontario's economy in decline, in jeopardy of having have-not status, Dalton McGuinty uses that same line: "Don't panic." Hopefully, later in debate we will hear one of the government members address Ontario's jeopardy at becoming a have-not province, express some concern and give some answers on how that's going to be reversed.

Let me give you some of the information upon which I am basing that statement. Ontario's per capita fiscal capacity has fallen from roughly \$400 above the equalization standard four years ago. The federal government sets a bar as the equalization standard and provinces that are above contribute to the equalization program; provinces that are below receive money from the "have" provinces. Ontario has always been above that bar since the birth of the equalization program. I'm quite sure Ontario's always above that bar.

#### 1640

Four years ago, around the time that Dalton McGuinty became Premier of this province, Ontario was \$400 above that equalization standard in the taxes kit—the highest taxes now in North America on business investment, higher energy prices, the runaway government spending, the increased red tape, the gargantuan growth in the number of government workers making over \$100,000 a year. Lots of vice-presidents and spin doctors hired; not many front-line workers on that list.

So you see that slow decline of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty. We were \$400 above that standard. Guess where we are today, Mr. Speaker: \$84 above that equalization standard, from \$400 just four years ago. If that trend continues, Ontario's in jeopardy, in two or three years' time, of falling below that banner and becoming a have-not province.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** We'd be on the receiving end.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** As my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton says, we'd be on the receiving end. I really hope that's not Dalton McGuinty's plan. I know he loves to blame the federal government for everything under the sun, but I really cannot believe that it is actually his plan to become an equalization province and then receive transfers from other provinces to fuel his runaway spending.

You'd think he'd raise taxes to as high as he's going to put them—right?—highest in North America on business etc. We didn't know that the tire tax and others were coming in. We didn't expect that because he said he

wouldn't do it. Fool me once, shame on you; all that kind of stuff. But he did.

The reality would be, if you're an equalization province, you'd receive funding from the other provinces and then Dalton McGuinty may go on another mad-money spending spree like we've seen in each of his budgets, including the 2008 budget.

I don't believe that's his motive. I don't believe that's his intent. I do believe that he shares the same concerns I do. I've not heard him talk about them in a serious way. But it is alarming to contemplate that Ontario has moved from \$400 above the equalization standard to a mere \$84 today.

To back up that statistic: In 2006, for the first time ever, Ontario's nominal GDP per capita fell below the Canadian average. If you take Ontario's gross domestic product, divide it by the number of people in the province of Ontario—GDP per capita, a measure of wealth of a province. For the first time ever, in 2006, Ontario's GDP per capita fell below the Canadian average. It's not the Ontario that you've always known, Mr. Speaker, not the Ontario my colleagues here have always known and not the Ontario that I grew up in—an Ontario below average in all of Canada in Dalton McGuinty's premiership. Four years ago, we were \$2,000 per capita above that national average. In 2006—Ontario is now below that average. That's a significant drop in a short period of time, from \$2,000 above to falling below that average.

It's matters like that that motivated the PC members of the finance committee to produce a dissenting report. We did bring forward several motions at the committee, the vast majority sadly voted down by the Liberal members of the committee. I know my colleague from Beaches—East York supported a number of those. We don't agree on all of those issues. There are some he didn't support, but we do appreciate his honest review of the motions, and he selected several to vote in favour of. The Liberal members of the committee, unfortunately, did not have that same fairness and voted down almost all of our motions, motivating the members of the committee, like Mr. Arnott from Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Barrett from Haldimand—Norfolk and myself from Niagara West—Glanbrook as the finance critic, to produce our report—which I recommend to members, if they haven't read it already—entitled *Once the Economic Engine of Canada, Now the Caboose: Are Dalton McGuinty's Harmful Economic Policies Driving Ontario to Have-Not Status?*

I mentioned a number of the findings of the committee, but let me give you a few more things that we heard about while travelling across the province. Under the title "McGuinty's Ontario Is Falling Below Economic Potential," it reads: "Under the McGuinty government, Ontario has become one of the slowest-growing provinces in Canada and has reported growth below the national average since 2005." That is, believe it or not, the longest string of underperformance in three decades in Ontario—below the national average since 2005.

"Slow growth: Ontario's growth in 2007 was the slowest in the country. All five major banks rank Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces for economic growth in 2008.

"Unemployment up: For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average. All five major banks predict Ontario's unemployment rate will continue to rise across both 2008 and 2009." This was surprising. If you listen to the government members boast, the government members boast about job creation. In reality, as I've indicated, it's one of the poorest performances in job creation, not only in Canada's but in Ontario's history. Under Dalton McGuinty, there are more people on welfare. "The number of single employable beneficiaries of welfare is currently 102,748, up 10,180 or 11% since September 2003."

I know that my colleague from Beaches—East York, the finance critic for the New Democratic Party, dedicated a significant amount of his response to Bill 44, talking about the lack of the so-called poverty agenda and how it had fallen short in a number of respects. I think it's a very fair assessment. Dalton McGuinty had indicated that one of the priorities of his government in his second term was the poverty agenda. But you'd have to search very, very thoroughly to try to find any mention—I don't even know if they talked about their poverty reduction strategy in the budget. My friend from Beaches—East York—I won't repeat all of his words—indicated a number of areas where they've fallen short. Of course, as a Progressive Conservative I believe the best approach to fighting poverty is the creation of well-paying jobs, helping people move up the economic ladder, provide for their families, to contribute back. But we have seen the number of single employables on welfare increase by 11% under Dalton McGuinty's government. As my colleague from Beaches—East York points out, the rate of assistance that they're receiving is actually lower on a purchasing power level than it has ever been.

"Consumer confidence down: Housing starts have declined consistently since 2003 and are projected to plummet in 2008 to 62,000 annually, down from a peak of over 91,000 annually in 2003." This is alarming too. "Talented workers are leaving in record numbers. Ontario reported a net loss of over 36,000 people to other provinces in 2007, with a record loss of 14,720 people in the third quarter alone, the biggest out-migration in Ontario's history." Let me be clear: These are net losses of talented Ontario residents. When you take the in-migrants and the out-migrants, I think for the first time ever—at least as far as we could tell—we have had year after year of out-migration from Ontario. That's certainly the opposite of what you would expect, considering Ontario's history, our enormous economic potential and the talent of the entrepreneurs and business leaders in this great province.

It really began in 2003-04: "in-migrants to the province, 57,000," approximately; "out-migrants, 64,000—a net decline of roughly 7,000 individuals." It's unfortunate, but it could have been addressed at that point in

time—a 7,000 loss. In 2004-05, that number of net out-migrants grows to almost twice the level, to 11,000. In 2005-06, the number of in-migrants is actually lower than it was in 2003-04. So fewer people were moving to Ontario, despite our population expected to be growing. There were fewer people moving to Ontario to find work, and the out-migrants increased from 64,000 in 2003 to 73,000 in 2005. The net out-migration from Ontario: 17,501.

**1650**

In 2006-07, the last year that we had this data compiled: 107,590 out-migrants from Ontario, dwarfing in-migrants, for a loss of 36,196—an unbelievable loss of talented individuals chasing jobs in other provinces.

Where have all the good jobs gone? If you look at the statistics, Ontario has gained 410,600 net new jobs since October 2003. When you bear down on the numbers, over half of these new jobs—208,100, to be precise, are public sector jobs, versus a mere 136,700 new private sector jobs. It's a good report; I recommend it. The growth in government has been larger than the growth in private sector jobs, which is at odds with what most provinces experience and certainly at odds with Ontario's history. The 208,000, the expansion of government jobs in Ontario, is about equal to the population of Kitchener, just to put that into perspective.

The total number of jobs in Ontario, when you include public and private sector jobs, was 6.6% since October 2003. This is a number that government members will brag about; they'll say, "We've had this great job creation of 6.6% since October 2003." So, over four years, only 6% job growth. It's meagre. But let's put this into further perspective. Across the nation, the average growth was 7.6%, so Ontario again, sadly, under Dalton McGuinty, is behind the rest of the provinces. Across the same period of time, the total number of jobs in Alberta and BC has increased by 15% and 13% respectively—more than double the rate of growth here in the province of Ontario. Ontario is the only province in Canada to create more public sector jobs than private sector jobs since October 2003. Ontario has witnessed the slowest growth in private sector job creation in all of Canada.

Let me tell you what they were. Private sector job creation growth since October 2003: Ontario, 3.2%. It has probably gone down, given some of the unfortunate financial news of early 2008. But as of the publication of this report, 3.2% was Ontario's growth rate in private sector jobs. The next closest: Quebec, at 5.7%. No; it's Nova Scotia: 3.8%. PEI: 11.9%; Newfoundland, 6.6%; Manitoba, 8.1%; Saskatchewan, 11%. Alberta and BC, I spoke about: 15% and 13%, respectively, in private sector job creation.

This tells you that something has gone wrong here in the province of Ontario. I know that if you listen to the Premier's responses in question period, he will say, "It's the dollar." One of his favourite places to appoint the blame is that the problem for Ontario is the dollar. Certainly the dollar has increased relative to the American dollar in the past couple of years. Correct me if I'm

wrong, but don't we have the same dollar in Saskatchewan? Don't we use the same dollar in Quebec? Don't we use the same dollar in PEI, whose job creation figures doubled those of the province of Ontario?

Dalton McGuinty also says, as my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton says, "It's fuel prices." As far as I know, last time I was in British Columbia, they filled up the cars with the same gas as we do here in Ontario. They still use the same types of energy sources that they do in other provinces. There's nothing different in that sense.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** As my colleague from Beaches-East York says, it's more expensive in these other provinces for gasoline, on average.

So other provinces face the same dollar, other provinces face the same fuel input costs. What's this other excuse?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Globalization.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** "Globalization," my friend from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek says, rightly so. Dalton McGuinty blames globalization as the problem here in the province of Ontario. Some bizarre factor, I guess, for globalization impacting only Ontario. Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and the territories face some other globalization. They have found some way to erect walls around their provinces and only Ontario is subject to the waves of globalization. It's nonsense.

Some will say maybe that's why he's sending the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to China, to try to combat the forces of globalization, or figure out some way to build a great wall around Ontario; what these other provinces I guess have figured out. Come on, it's a bunch of nonsense. Other provinces face the same external tides the province of Ontario does.

As I have indicated, across a number of measures—when it comes to job creation, construction, manufacturing success, growth of their economies—Ontario is at the back of the pack, facing the same challenges the other provinces face. I think that can draw only one logical conclusion, and that is that Dalton McGuinty's harmful fiscal policies have weakened the province of Ontario to the point where it's much more difficult for us to compete with the other provinces and states. You've seen the results in the manufacturing job losses and the slowdown in our economy to the point of potentially experiencing a recession in 2008.

I call it the Dalton McGuinty recession, because it is Dalton McGuinty's fiscal policies that stand out from all the other provinces. I asked him one time what made him so smart. Why did he have different ideas and stick to them, compared to the other provinces that have demonstrated success? I don't know if I have an answer to that, particularly, that I want to voice here in the assembly, but I've yet to hear a good answer from the Premier as to why he thinks that his outdated tax-and-spend policies are the right approach when all information points at the opposite conclusion.



When an NDP government in Saskatchewan, an NDP government in Manitoba, a Liberal government in British Columbia, a Conservative government in Alberta, a minority Liberal government in Quebec and Conservative governments on the east coast all pursue different policies to make their provinces more open for business investment, Dalton McGuinty goes the opposite direction with his old-fashioned tax-and-spend policies that have put Ontario on the brink of a Dalton McGuinty recession.

What do John Tory and the Ontario PCs recommend as an alternative?

**Hon. David Caplan:** Where is John Tory these days?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** In fact, my colleague would be very pleased to hear that John Tory today hosted a press conference pointing out the gargantuan growth in the number of government workers receiving \$100,000 a year plus, particularly focusing on upper management and the significant increases they've received in their pay packages; widely out of whack with what real working families in the province of Ontario are experiencing.

In fact, I think the minister knows of the growth rate of those in the \$100,000 club: some 20 or so VPs at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., by way of example. When you looked at the number of people on the sunshine list, it was eye-opening. Maybe I'll get to that. If I have time, I will get to the sunshine list because you were so kind to ask about John Tory's press conference today, and I appreciate your curiosity.

John Tory and the Ontario PCs recommend an acceleration of plans announced in the fall economic statement to eliminate the capital tax for all businesses immediately. I think my colleagues know that the government had some \$5 billion more in revenue than they projected they would have in the 2007-08 budget. All of that pretty well has been socked away into base funding. Surely they could have found some room to lower the tax burden, including the elimination of the capital taxes for all businesses immediately, like the federal government has done.

Reduce the corporate income tax rate to a competitive level "and reduce the tax burden for small businesses.

"Reduce the regulatory burden on all businesses." I talked about the red tape, and there'll probably be a chance to talk about that in the assembly later on.

Give hardworking Ontarians and seniors a tax break.

**1700**

There's no doubt that it has become increasingly difficult for working families and seniors to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. I haven't even talked about the so-called health tax yet, which can be up to \$900 per income earner and their family; and if there are two, \$1,800. Energy and other utility rates have increased. Gas prices are up. Fees were increased, and heaven help you if you had chiropractic care, optometry or physiotherapy when Dalton McGuinty delisted those services from OHIP payment. Now you have to pay out of pocket.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Or if you're going to have to buy new tires.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Boy, when you have to put on those new tires, as my colleague points out, who knows what kind of new Dalton McGuinty tire tax you're going to face?

The reality, the PC caucus has calculated, is that the average family in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is now paying \$2,000 more in higher taxes, fees and utility expenses. So we've called for them to get some kind of break.

"Address the looming energy crisis and provide a responsible plan" to replace dirty coal power that will not compromise our future energy supply.

"Begin serious consultations with Ottawa on the subject of tax reform" and develop a manpower strategy to address the looming skilled shortage. That seven-point plan is focused, thoughtful, and one that can turn around the state of Ontario's economy. It's certainly a much better prescription for the future of Ontario than a continuation down the path of Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend.

My colleague had asked a little bit about the sunshine list. As I had mentioned, spending under the McGuinty government went up precipitously. As my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka said a few short moments ago, "Dalton McGuinty has increased program spending by 48%"—almost 50%. We always think of good old Bob Rae and David Peterson as the poster children for runaway spending.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Gargantuan.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** "Gargantuan" is what some may characterize it, as the last two Premiers are known for their runaway spending. When you look at Dalton McGuinty's increases, they simply dwarf those of the Bob Rae government. They started out spending money significantly and then they had to slow it down to try to balance the books. I think their spending increase over five years was 15%.

David Peterson was the king; David Peterson was the king of tax and spend. He wrote the book. He is in the tax-and-spend hall of fame. Some of the members here were part of that, remembering the glory days of tax and spend, when the NDP took power and they plummeted into recession because of those tax-and-spend policies and had a massive deficit to overcome. We all know that David Peterson's government had the kings and queens of tax and spend. David Peterson, the king of program spending increases, increased program spending 42%.

Dalton McGuinty has increased program spending by 48%. That pedestal, the David Peterson statue that stands in the tax-and-spend hall of fame, is going to be toppled. The brand new, shiny Dalton McGuinty statue will be a tribute to runaway spending: 48% in his five years in office.

But how has it manifested itself? If you're a senior trying to get your husband or wife into a long-term-care home and are on a growing waiting list for that kind of care, you're not seeing that spending going to front-line, long-term-care services. If you're a new mother, worried about your baby, and take your baby to emergency—

we've seen the long wait lists at emergency rooms, whether in Sarnia, Niagara or across the province—you're not seeing that money invested in front-line services. If you're a tender fruit grower and worked at CanGro in Niagara, for example, and are looking for some help in the transition program, you're not seeing that money go to front-line services.

But where are you seeing it? I know my friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal had asked me to talk a bit about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.'s sunshine list, if I recall accurately. The number of \$100,000 earners at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has increased—get this—between 2003 and 2007, by 107%, from 86 to 178 people making more than \$100,000 a year. Let's put it into perspective too. I know I keep saying that, but I think this is important. The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. is actually bringing less net revenue to the province today than it has for many, many years. It's in decline. There have been layoffs at the casinos. The border casinos are challenged. I know the minister is concerned about that, and we've had some conversations about that. But I hope he cracks the whip at the OLGC when we see fewer people working at the tourism destinations and we see a 107% growth rate in the number of \$100,000 earners. The salary of the vice-president and chief information officer increased \$86,215, or 43%, since 2003 at the OLGC.

For our interest, the same ministry has responsibility for the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. The LCBO is not at the level of the OLGC in terms of the increase in \$100,000 positions, but I do note that between 2003 and 2007 the number of \$100,000 earners has increased from 89 to 157, or a 76% increase in those in that circle.

If you're somebody who was laid off from Cadbury Schweppes in St. Catharines, if you're a young graduate from McMaster University looking for a job in the Stoney Creek area and you're finding your economic opportunities may be greater to fly on Air Duncan and head out to Saskatchewan or British Columbia, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies, you have to be pretty outraged. You have to be pretty outraged when you see government agencies increasing their payroll in the \$100,000-and-over club by 76% or 107%. I know my colleague the minister will be giving that direction, if he hasn't already, to find some restraint in that spending in middle management and upper management positions at the agencies for which he is responsible.

My colleague from Sarnia-Lambton brought forth a very important issue in question period just this past week when he pointed out the growth rate of the salaries of the top Liberal appointees at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. My colleague noted that the salary of the president and CEO has increased by \$140,719, or 55%, since 2003. Is this the former Liberal member?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I think I read that.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A former Liberal MPP.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** And federal member.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** And federal member.

Between 2003 and 2007, the number of paid positions of \$100,000 or more has gone up some 30.2% at the WSIB.

At a time when we read and see on TV that nurses are being fired by the McGuinty government, at a time when we find out that it's more difficult to get a long-term-care placement in a budget that falls very short on addressing some of the real needs in our long-term-care sector, we see that the local health integration networks—this new agency that's been created by the McGuinty government as sort of a belt of middle management between the Ministry of Health and front-line service delivery agents. It was a priority. Dalton McGuinty thought it would be good idea to create these redistributive bodies that actually don't deliver any front-line services.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Just advice.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** They give advice, I guess; make some decisions, I suppose; but don't deliver an ounce of front-line services. The number of \$100,000 earners has increased from 13 to 53 in one short year alone. There were none a few years ago; these things didn't exist. Creating this level of middle management in health care was one of Dalton McGuinty's policy ideas. We voted against it, but he has done so. There were none, obviously, pre-2006; now, up to 53—a 33% increase in one short year. The salary of the CEO in Toronto Centre's LHIN increased 75%, to \$207,946, according to the sunshine list.

**1710**

MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—and hopefully I'll have some time to address some concerns about MPAC—under the McGuinty government, increased—you thought the OLGC was large, Mr. Speaker; get ready for this. MPAC has increased the number of people making \$100,000 a year or more by 208%. It has gone from 13 to 40—208% at MPAC. This is at a time, mind you, that property assessments have been frozen. Remember: Dalton McGuinty cynically froze property assessments—in 2007, was it? No, 2006; my apology; until after the election. It was a hot issue. Assessments were going through the roof. They had no answers. Some Liberals voted against our efforts to try to cap those assessments. So assessments have been frozen. No assessments have been happening, aside from new residences. Assessment values are frozen at the level of January 1, 2005, yet somehow, between 2003 and 2007, the number of positions making \$100,000 a year or more has increased by 208%. What are these folks doing?

On this topic, by the way, the bill does address the Assessment Act but falls well short of what's going to be needed. As you are probably well aware, Mr. Speaker, now that we're through the election, Dalton McGuinty's cynical cap or freeze has come off.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Look out.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** He froze them to get through the election; now they've come off in 2008. My colleague from Sarnia-Lambton says, "Look out," because we will be hit with a triple whammy—three property assessment increases hitting all at once. The value will go from

January 1, 2005, to January 1, 2008, so homeowners, seniors and families, young people trying to work their way up the ladder will get a triple whammy of property assessments all at once.

We will continue to call, on this side of the House, for a cap on those assessments that exists in many jurisdictions in North America, probably representing a half or more of the population on this continent. The Liberal government refuses to do so. To use an example: They talk about a phase-in, and they use—rather cynically, for lack of a better word—a 20% increase over four years. That would be 5% a year. It's going to be the rare home in Ontario that will see only a 20% increase when these caps come off. It's like putting a cap on a boiling pot of water that's coming off this fall. We're going to see high double-digit to triple-digit increases in property assessments. I do hope my colleagues across the floor will support our initiative to cap those assessments when the pressure comes back on this fall.

Because of the failure to address the major economic concerns of this budget, I'm encouraging my friends here in the Legislature to vote against Bill 44 and come up with a real plan to help our economy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened intently to my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook for an hour—some of it here, some of it in the ante-room—because I like to watch him on television where I can actually see his face. The one thing about sitting behind a member is that you have to watch most of the stuff from the back. So I watched him and listened intently to what he had to say. He talked about a number of things that, time permitting, I'd like to just touch on.

The first was the failure of the finance committee, the finance committee that travelled through eight places in Ontario, listened to 175 deputations, got 100 written deputations, and the Liberal members never passed a single motion in support of anything that anyone had to say. Four self-congratulatory amendments was all it was to commend the minister for doing a good job; keep doing the good job. There were four of those. Nothing else that anyone had to say found its way into the budget.

He was right that there were dissenting reports. The Conservatives wrote a dissenting report, as did the NDP. Again, none of the views that we put forward and none of the motions that we put forward saw the light of day.

He was right when he was talking about what is happening in the province of Ontario, that the riches of this province are starting to fray at the edges. He's absolutely right. The per capita income is declining to the point where Ontario is in danger of becoming a have-not province.

In the last 35 seconds, I'd like to talk about his last point, which was property assessment and what is likely to happen this year. I worry about that, and I think I need to worry a lot more, because in this budget the government saw fit to put forward some \$250 maximum per year per pensioner for poor seniors. That is the harbinger

of things to come. They would not be putting that in if they were not afraid themselves of what's going to happen when this tax comes back in September or October. That, I can guarantee you, is the real rationale for that.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I also listened as the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook talked about the budget and his impressions of the skills-to-jobs action plan. I notice that he got a bit of coaching from my neighbour in Sarnia—Lambton, who also seems to not support the skills-to-jobs action plan. I'm very disappointed in that. When we're back in our respective ridings, which are neighbouring ridings, the member from Sarnia—Lambton has said that he wants to work with me in making sure that we get the Royal Dutch Shell plant coming into St. Clair township; part of that is certainly going to have a really positive impact on both our ridings. So when I look at it, and I hear him saying that he doesn't want to see my constituents, or his constituents, for that matter, get retraining so that they can be part of what brings that plant to our ridings, I'm very disappointed indeed. I think what we need to do when we are looking at possibilities such as that is to provide the skills and the skilled labour force that is required for a plant like that.

There is a change coming in terms of the types of jobs we have. Many people are looking at a second career and they need the training that will be brought forward by that. I think that, in terms of attracting new industries, we need to have our labour force ready to work. They need to be trained and ready. It's part of the attraction that we have. It's part of the package that we offer as a province to new industries, and we need to be able to have those people ready to do that. So I'm very disappointed that the opposition doesn't feel that the skills-to-jobs action plan and, certainly, the second-career strategy are going to provide for a future in our constituencies.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook does an excellent job as the opposition finance critic. He does an excellent job in a very practical, on-the-ground way, and it's exemplified in his remarks over the past hour. We see this in his travelling with a number of us on the finance committee. He really doesn't miss much.

He mentioned the loss of the peach and pear processing in the Niagara area, and that impacts some of the orchard men in my riding. Of course, we all know the loss of the juice grape processing in the province of Ontario with the shutdown of Cadbury Schweppes. We see no mention of these issues in this budget, no mention in this budget of the tough times that other fruit and vegetable growers are going through.

Fruit and vegetable is labour-intensive, with a heavy reliance on offshore and domestic help. The question is—and we don't see any indication in the budget—how can they meet the future requirements of the minimum wage? How can our fruit and vegetable people compete with the low-price imports?

Other commodities—no specific mention; obviously, hogs, beef, tobacco. Where were these farmers highlighted in the budget?

Taxes—obviously, no tax hikes announced in this budget. These came within a few days afterwards, the tire recycling and electronics recycling tax. I don't remember any promises along those lines.

1720

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'd like to start off by just saying that I concur with my learned colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook. We share many similar problems in the Hamilton-Niagara region, whether it be job loss, poverty, lack of communication with Queen's Park. The problem is that we're constantly seeing these promises made by the government, but for some reason, they seem to end in Burlington. I hate to say this, but there is Ontario west of Burlington.

We have a major problem in our area. I could just go on and on about the job loss. It's phenomenal. I really am amazed when I hear government members from Oakville, Essex-Kent, stand up and be upset with me that I was a little disappointed that there were only 300 jobs created in a Ford plant in Essex-Kent—300 jobs. We're losing thousands of jobs in the Hamilton area. All through Ontario, the automotive industry has been hit hard.

I am going, in the future, to bring forth numbers to support my claims so that the government will really sit back and realize that the 300 jobs that they're bragging about—I'm glad 300 people got work, but there were over 700 people working in that plant, so 400 of them don't see any jobs coming their way; half of the people in that one plant, which they're going to re-fit and put back into action—not a new plant, not a new business, just bringing back one that shouldn't have been in the position it's in because of economic problems in this province.

In future days, I will bring forth more and more examples of, stop focusing on one little thing—and all the other things that are wrong.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I thank my colleagues all for their kind comments. I think my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is right. I've seen it myself. When Dalton McGuinty, in his limousine, starts hitting the Burlington bridge, he takes out his passport, because I think he thinks on the other side of that bridge he's entering New York State, for all the attention we've received in Hamilton and Niagara.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Although my colleague from Beaches—East York points out that my story is probably not believable because Dalton McGuinty usually flies when he's visiting Hamilton.

I do have to say I'm a little disappointed in the comments made by my colleague from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex because I know the member from Sarnia—Lambton is a real fighter for jobs in his riding.

It's unfortunate, but the reality is that today you've got to scrap for every job, Lord knows, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. When you have high energy rates, the highest taxes in North America, red tape spooling out of every cabinet meeting, runaway spending, you've got to batten down the hatches and fight for every manufacturing job in this province. Sadly, members that are on that side aren't doing a good enough job, because 192,000 have left under Dalton McGuinty.

Let me conclude with one of my constituents who e-mailed me, Bob Biggar from Pelham. He said, in an e-mail:

"I listened to what you had to say yesterday at Queen's Park, and I want you to know that I appreciate very much all that you are doing to raise awareness of the fact that good jobs are disappearing in a dramatic manner. I also listened to what Mr. McGuinty had to say, and he seems to be quite proud of the monies that he is putting into retraining people who need it to find another job. My concern with his self-adulation is that I have no idea why a person would take the time to retrain him or herself for a job that no longer exists. This is the point that I believe totally escapes him."

The problem with their so-called skills-to-jobs strategy is they seem to be training people to hop on Air Duncan and get jobs out in Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Today I'd like to discuss the budget. Where is the 2008 budget? That's the question.

What is amazing about the Liberals' 2008 budget is that most of the spending announced has already happened. Budgets are supposed to be forward-looking documents to give to citizens a sense of the direction the government is taking. Budget 2008 made countless re-announcements of decisions presented in December's fall economic statement.

Bill 44, the omnibus budget bill, contains word-for-word the proposal presented in Bill 24 for the fall economic statement in the Legislature. For example, the government announces over and over their decision to accelerate the capital tax reduction and tax changes for small businesses.

What is clear from these reannouncements is the lack of a plan: no plan to revive a troubled economy and disappearing manufacturing jobs, no plan to bring people out of poverty, and no plan on an ever-worsening environment.

The manufacturing crisis: During last fall's election campaign and continuing on through the winter and spring sessions, we in the NDP have been clear that the jobs crisis in the manufacturing and resource sectors is the number one challenge facing this Legislature. Since June 2004, almost 200,000 good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector have disappeared in this province. This number doesn't include the almost 10,000 direct jobs lost in forestry that have decimated many northern Ontario resource communities that I'll address more directly a little later.

Since Dalton McGuinty came to power, Ontario has lost 18% of its high-paying manufacturing jobs. That's \$6.6 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy. That very scary number of 18% sounds good compared to the absolute devastation of the manufacturing sectors that communities such as Hamilton have endured, where 30% of the manufacturing jobs have been lost. But all this pales in comparison to the hit that Windsor has taken, where close to 40% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and which now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada.

Here are some other numbers that demonstrate the depth of the jobs crisis in Ontario's manufacturing and resource sectors:

—Under the McGuinty watch, 10,000 forest sector jobs worth \$869 million to the Ontario economy have been lost. Northerners have lost seven out of 10 of those jobs.

—Ontario manufacturing employment stood at 913,000 in February 2008. That's a loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004, or about 18% of total manufacturing jobs.

—Auto parts and assembly, steel and forest products have been particularly hard hit.

—Statistics Canada has found that the average worker who has lost a job in the manufacturing sector suffers a 25% drop in wages in his or her new job. That's a loss of \$10,000 in wages per worker.

—Manufacturing jobs paid an average of \$20.68 per hour in 2007. That's significantly above the average hourly wage of \$18.42 per hour.

For the past four years, the NDP has been sounding the alarm over this crisis in our manufacturing and resource communities and putting forward such constructive solutions as a jobs protection commissioner, an industrial hydro rate and tougher plant closure legislation. These are good ideas, and the NDP will continue to fight to make them a reality. Unfortunately, the government has rejected all of them.

More recently, we in the NDP have proposed an ambitious but doable three-part jobs stimulus package, consisting of:

- a manufacturing investment tax credit;
- an aggressive Buy Ontario program for all transit vehicles of 50% of contract value;
- the immediate investment of \$350 million in federal labour adjustment funds in vulnerable communities.

The credit would be 10% of investments in new machinery, buildings and equipment. An added incentive of a 20% credit would be available for investments in green industry jobs. This is an idea that has been widely endorsed by economists and has been implemented with impressive results in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The federal government also provides just this sort of credit in the Maritime provinces. In its budget several weeks ago, Quebec became the third province to endorse the idea and will offer a provincial credit shortly. And apparently, Mr. Ramsay, in his interim report on manufacturing, also

endorses the concept. It's right there on page 28 of the budget.

Unfortunately, rather than simply introducing a provincial manufacturing credit in its budget, the government has reverted to its unfortunate habit of pointing fingers at Ottawa and merely recommends that the federal government offer a credit for Ontario.

So, economists, labour, business and three provinces think it's a good idea. The government's own manufacturing adviser thinks it's a good idea. But when it comes to actually committing some funds at a time of unprecedented pressures on the manufacturing engine of the Ontario economy, all the government can do is point its finger at Ottawa.

#### 1730

I'd now like to turn to the crisis in care in our long-term-care facilities.

Treating our parents and grandparents with some dignity: The sad fact is that in this province, after four years of promising a revolution in long-term care, there are still no minimum standards of daily nursing and personal care for seniors living in long-term-care facilities and homes. With the release of this budget, it's become clear that Ontarians can't trust the Minister of Health and his government to take health and long-term care seriously. This first became painfully apparent when the minister, in a not uncommon display of poor judgment, said that he would personally test an adult incontinence product used by residents in long-term-care homes. The minister's remarks were clearly uncalled for and beside the point.

But the real insult to our parents and grandparents is contained in the numbers presented in the budget. The \$155.5 million in new money this year will only result in a paltry six minutes of increased care—unbelievable. This is clearly inadequate. To achieve a guaranteed 3.5 hours of daily care—the level of care recommended by most experts—at least 60 minutes of increased care is needed. I repeat: The NDP believes seniors in long-term-care homes deserve a guaranteed minimum standard of nursing and personal care of 3.5 hours a day; a minimum standard of hands-on care of 3.5 hours a day. It would ensure that, at the very least, our seniors get the basic support they need every day in their lives. After a lifetime of building our province and our communities, our seniors deserve better, and a minister who at least shows serious concern for their plight.

There are other health care priorities that were missing in the budget. In its health care motions to the finance committee, the NDP proposed a number of practical measures that should have been implemented in the 2008-09 budget. All were voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee and were missing in the budget.

In addition to long-term care, the NDP health care motion contained the following measures: Funding for community health centres—CHCs—and the aboriginal health access centres—AHACs—to provide publicly funded oral health care such as checkups, fillings,

extractions and emergency care to all Ontario children who have been shut out by the high cost dental care; special funding to a provincial network of CHCs and AHACs in order to ensure that every Ontarian who needs access to CHCs and AHACs—primary health care—can access these services. This would require the establishment of no fewer than 20 new CHCs and AHACs per year over the four-year mandate of the government, starting in 2009-10; and ending the three-month wait period for OHIP coverage required of newly arrived immigrants. Ontario should take its place with the nine provinces and territories that have seen the value in relieving new immigrants of this additional burden. None of this was acted upon in the budget—none of it.

I would now like to say a few words about the disgrace of poverty in this very rich province.

An anti-poverty strategy: In 2003, Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals promised to end the clawback of national child care supplements. McGuinty broke that promise, but that hasn't stopped him from making it again in 2007. Just as shameful, families and individuals receiving social assistance, both Ontario disability support programs and Ontario Works benefits, are actually receiving less in provincial benefits, when inflation is taken into account, than they were when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003. Ontario's poorest citizens have been falling behind for eight years. When the McGuinty government was elected, over four years later, the poorest amongst us are still falling behind.

Meanwhile, Ontario's working poor are also falling farther and farther behind. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, 1.2 million working women and men earn less than \$10 an hour. The government is excited about their 75-cent raise. Well, I don't know about them, but I know I couldn't live on \$8.75 an hour, so I would like them to show me how they can run their budget on that. Those 1.2 million Ontarians are predominantly women, young people and new Canadians. In fact, someone working 40 hours a week at \$8 an hour earns \$320 a week, or \$16,640 a year, \$4,000 below the low-income cut-off point. I don't know how I could live. The NDP believes that aggressive measures should have been taken in the provincial budget to bring the level of poverty down now; not three years from now, not two years from now—now. That simply didn't happen.

For example, the province announced that they are doubling support for meals for children in schools and community centres through the student nutrition program—a great program. However, I don't know if a dollar a week for each child is going to get—I don't even think that would buy me a chocolate bar, and we don't want that in the schools. So we don't have to worry about it because it wouldn't even buy that. Unfortunately, the program is meagre. Even when doubled, \$20 million annually means \$50 a year for each of the 400,000 students expected to benefit from this big announcement; hardly enough to provide nutritious food to children and young people on a regular basis. I don't know what you can get for a dollar a week, but it's not very much.

In the finance committee, the NDP moved a number of motions outlining an ambitious anti-poverty program. Among the motions moved were:

Eliminate the national child care benefit clawback. The government in its budget failed to eliminate this clawback and instead stuck to a timetable that will extend the phase-out over another four years, four more years of these families suffering in this province. Unacceptable.

Immediately implement the full Ontario child benefit that would provide equal benefits to all low-income families regardless of source of income. Again, the government refused to budge from its four-year phase-in timetable.

Introduce a \$10.25-an-hour minimum wage for Ontario effective July 1, 2008, with an annual increase resulting in an \$11 minimum wage in 2011. Instead, the government stuck to its current timetable of \$10.25 an hour by 2010.

In the NDP's opinion, this is not a budget that deals with the very serious problem of poverty in our midst.

Let's talk about property tax reform and fair funding for our cities. The NDP believes that measures should have been included in the budget that would have delivered a fair deal to municipalities. That simply didn't happen, with no announcements regarding uploading the provincially mandated programs downloaded during the Harris era. The NDP planned to rebalance the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship, freeze transit fares for two years, ease pressure on rising property taxes and provide increased support for key municipal services.

The NDP believes that we must return to a timetable when families paid fair property taxes and got good value for their money in municipal service, such as police, transit, waste disposal and parks and rec. The problem is that it's just not that way any more because the McGuinty government is proceeding too slowly.

Provincially mandated social programs on the municipal property tax: As a result, property taxes are up, the quality of services is down, and today's families are paying a price in higher property taxes. In the area of Hamilton, where I'm from, we pay one of the highest residential taxes in Ontario because 70% of our tax base was based on industry and 30% residential. Well, it's reversed now because of all the major companies that pulled out. Old people are being forced into retirement homes, into facilities, because they can't afford to pay their taxes. It's unacceptable. Why isn't this government looking at residential relief for the Hamilton area?

The NDP argued for a fair deal for municipalities that would rebalance the fiscal relationship between the province and the municipalities by relieving property taxpayers of the burden of paying for provincially mandated programs. This budget clearly failed to deliver on this objective.

In addition to uploading provincially mandated social programs, Ontario desperately needs a top-to-bottom overhaul of its property assessment system. Seniors and others on fixed incomes simply cannot afford the double-

digit increases in property taxes year after year while their incomes stay the same.

That's why the NDP's widely acclaimed freeze-to-sale assessment model is so badly needed. This would include reform of the residential property tax assessment model so that no residential properties are reassessed until the property is sold or the owner does more than \$40,000 in renovations; implement all of the Ombudsman's recommendations to reform MPAC. None of these appeared in the budget.

1740

Let's move on to child care—highly touted by the government. Once again, the Liberals have failed to deliver on their 2003 commitment to invest \$300 million of new provincial money to expand the regulated non-profit child care sector. The commitment of \$25 million reannounced in this year's budget will have little impact on the quality or affordability of child care. A publicly provided high-quality affordable child care system that provides space for every child is possible. Quebec is building a quality child care system where two thirds of the children have access to a \$7-per-day program. The Liberal government has failed to provide any leadership, and 330,000 of our children in Ontario have been long forgotten.

Today, the NDP tabled Bill 26, which takes an important step on child care. The bill would restrict new child care licences to not-for-profit operators while renewing licences for existing for-profit operators. Bill 26 ensures that public money is spent on children, not profit, and prevents big-box child care providers from operating in this province. If you want to follow one of the operators, follow the one from Australia. The quality has gone down. He's expanding, making hundreds of millions of dollars, and child care where he operates is on the downslide big-time. Unfortunately, just a few hours ago, your government voted this very important bill down.

My favourite topic, municipal infrastructure: Municipalities across Ontario are facing massive infrastructure deficit, a result of the provincial cutbacks in the 1990s. Over the last 15 years, the responsibility for funding infrastructure has been shifted heavily towards municipalities, who lack fair revenue-raising tools and are forced to increase property taxes or reduce the social services they were told to provide. The municipal infrastructure deficit is piling up and now is in the \$65-billion range. In water and waste water alone, the deficit is \$30 to \$40 billion, and the government announced \$1 billion or so. That might be enough to repair the damaged Skyway Bridge cement, but it's my understanding that \$450 million of that money is going to stay in the greater Toronto area and some to Mississauga. So if you take the remaining, let's say, \$500 million and spread it all over Ontario, I don't think a lot's going to get fixed. These numbers translate into day-to-day impacts on quality of life and productivity. We hear often of the crumbling roads, lack of adequate transit and pipe breaks that cause major traffic delays.

This government has addressed the infrastructure deficit in an odd way. Rather than designating a long-term sustainable funding formula that Ontario's municipalities can count on year after year, the province has funded municipal infrastructure on an ad hoc one-time basis. It is only when there is money left at the end of the year that this government has chosen to fund infrastructure. No clearer is this policy direction than the recent introduction of the Investing in Ontario Act. Under this piece of legislation, municipalities are rewarded with infrastructure dollars when the government incorrectly forecasts the size of their surplus. Infrastructure funding shouldn't be about odds-making, gambling and one-time surpluses. This government must show some leadership and create a new long-term infrastructure funding program that addresses the infrastructure deficit, which will only climb.

Environment: In April 2007, Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller said that the Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources were starved of funding for core functions. At that time of unprecedented public concern for the health of the planet, Ontarians may find it hard to believe that these two ministries are today struggling with fewer resources than in the early 1990s, but that is unfortunately the case. Without adequate resources, government ministries will be unable to develop the new regulations on energy efficiency and greenhouse-gas caps that are required to address climate change, nor will they be able to enforce existing regulations.

What did we see in this budget? A joint increase of 3.5% for the ministries.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I listened intently to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I really just want to touch upon, in the limited time, four or five areas that he referenced during his 20 minutes.

Along the course of the 20 minutes, he spoke about manufacturing and didn't recognize the move in the budget to eliminate the capital tax retroactively on manufacturing and resource industries, which will result in about \$190 million back to those industries in an effort of assistance to them to continue to invest and grow and sustain manufacturing in Ontario. Examples of where we've had some recent success—I know, out my way, and I know the member from Oshawa and members aren't here, but the Oshawa truck plant just announced a callback as they need to push out more of the Silverados and the plan for a change-over. So certainly, there's life in the economy, particularly in areas such as the auto industry.

We spoke rather extensively in regard to finance committee activity. I guess the Liberal members didn't necessarily agree with the NDP campaign platform because much of what he was speaking of was their platform. We didn't agree with that and obviously neither did the people of Ontario, in the vast majority. We've dealt with the minimum wage—\$8.75 as of March 31, midnight; a further 75 cents in each of the next two years

to bring it to \$10.25, just as we had committed to. It doesn't sit well with the member opposite. They wanted something else, but it's what we committed to. We committed to it before the election and we committed to it during this budget process.

As we look at new business opportunities, the 10-year income tax exemption for new businesses for intellectual properties from Canadian colleges, universities or research institutes are the way of the future in creating innovative technology here in Canada and here in Ontario, not unlike what happened with the likes of RIM. We're offering, though, a 10-year tax exemption. A number of things in our budget directly address the economic situation the province finds itself in currently, all of which are quite positive.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I'm pleased to speak for a couple of minutes on the Hamilton East–Stoney Creek member's statement here. He's quite right. He pointed out a lot of deficiencies within this budget. This budget was long on rhetoric and short on details. That's the problem. This government goes out and mentions a lot of things, but we don't really know whether it's going to happen, because look at what happened in the past four years. It's pretty tough for them to keep their promises because they love to promise everything to everybody and sometimes they just can't keep them.

One of the ones I like to talk about is the agriculture one. They brag about what they did for agriculture, but they absolutely did nothing for the poor farmers out in the field who are putting in seed; the beef farmer; the pork farmer. They did absolutely nothing for them. Sure, they added some money here and there for a few things at university and that, but that's not going to help the farmer out in the field. They did absolutely nothing for that person, and that is really disappointing because farmers feed us. There are going to be a lot of farmers upset.

I know that across the way, they'll say, "The OFA thought it was fine." When farmers come to my office and they're complaining, I will send them to the OFA and let them decide what they're going to do because I think that the leaders of the OFA really misunderstood this. Maybe they want to run for the Liberals—I have no idea—but I'm certainly disappointed with the members of the OFA for saying, "What a glowing budget," because they didn't do anything for us.

It certainly is nice to see that the Minister of Agriculture is here today and listening to us because I know she'll do her best to do what she can, but she's working with a caucus that really doesn't understand rural Ontario. That's their trouble. She has difficulties. I know she tries to do her best, but when you've got a caucus that doesn't understand rural Ontario, what do you do? You just do your best and hope something sometimes comes up good.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened intently through the entire speech of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. One has to remember that he is a relatively new member of this Legislature. He obviously has done his homework and he has obviously taken the time to study

this budget and to understand the implications of what is in it. He spoke passionately in a number of areas and should be commended.

I do have to take some umbrage at the comment by the member from Pickering–Scarborough East. He was dismissive of what this member from Hamilton–Stoney Creek had to say and put it to down to so much NDP rhetoric in election campaigns. I think that the member clearly reflected on what he had to say. He would be more mindful of the 175 deputants who came before our committee, 175 people who said virtually the same thing as the recommendations that were made to the committee by form of motion, and 100 people who wrote written submissions, none of whom were listened to. Those people asked for most of the same things that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had in his submission.

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They asked for things like a \$10 minimum wage now. They asked for living conditions for people on ODSP and Ontario Works to improve now. They asked for the building of substantial housing now. They asked for all the things that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had to talk about. They were concerned about the environment.

I would say to the honourable member opposite, the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, the member who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and who had carriage of what took place during the committee, that he should have been listening during that committee. He would have heard the people of Ontario speaking to the same things that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had to say today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** We have time for one last question or comment.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I appreciate the time. As we sit here this evening and most evenings, it seems that we see the same theme replaying itself here over and over again. On the left, we're hearing from the NDP that we're not spending enough money in our budgets. On the right, we're hearing from the Conservatives on a regular basis that we are spending too much money, although on a regular basis we have the Conservative members visiting our ministers on this side of the House, asking for support for particular projects in their ridings. So the same theme continues to repeat itself here in the Legislature. It's unfortunate.

What we hear in our budget is a fiscal capacity to make investments in the services that the people in Ontario value. Unfortunately, today we saw both parties make an attempt to politically exploit an issue that appeared in one of the local Toronto newspapers about nurses in a particular hospital, when in fact it's the fiscal capacity in our budgets that has allowed us to address that very same issue.

You know very well that in the last four-year mandate of this government we were able to hire close to 8,000 more nurses through investments in public services. That's the kind of thing our friends across the way are arguing against. They will also know very well that in



this year's platform, leading up to the election in 2007, we made a commitment to hire 8,000 or 9,000 more nurses. One of the things that I learned first, after the election in 2003, was that there are many health care providers in Ontario who are very upset when hospitals consistently—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I would ask the members of the House to come to order and allow the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to complete his remarks. I'll give you some extra time.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Thank you, Speaker.

We do know on a regular basis that there are many health care providers in this province who were thrilled with the policy position taken by our government, by our Premier and by our Minister of Health, who moved toward getting hospitals to sign accountability agreements so they would have to live within their budgeted means. By doing that, we were able to free up resources to invest in other health care providers right across the spectrum. It's a good thing; we've done good work. The attempted political exploitation today was a bit unseemly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I thank the members for Pickering–Scarborough, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Beaches–East York for their comments. I'm a little disappointed with the members for Thunder Bay and Pickering–Scarborough East. It appears that they didn't like what they heard, and I'm a firm believer that the truth hurts. So I'm assuming that they'll come to their senses in the next few years in this Legislature. I'll be more than happy to show them the way to the land of promise, where people are equal—equal in this province. I don't think they understand that their people are equal and they deserve the same as everyone else.

Getting back to the comments from my joint member for Beaches–East York, I'd like to thank him for his comments. That's what I believe we are in House for: to debate. If the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan doesn't want to debate things and he thinks we're using this as a political tool, that's unfortunate, because this is the only way that the opposition has an opportunity to talk and challenge the government on decisions they make in a majority government.

I'll be looking forward to future exchanges from that member. I hope he understands and tries to show the respect that the opposition parties deserve.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** It being 6 of the clock—at least according to the Speaker's watch—we will now move forward.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member for Parkdale–High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Premier with respect to the planned trip to China of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Premier or his designate may reply for up to five minutes. I recognize the member for Parkdale–High Park.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I'd like to start with a quote: "Individuals have international duties which transcend the national" or provincial "obligations of obedience.... Therefore, [citizens] have the duty to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring." That's from the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, but I think it's extremely appropriate for this circumstance.

What we are asking—the people who care about human rights in Canada, and the entire Tibetan community not only in Ontario but around the world—is that people consider at this time any trips to China. That's number one.

But also, number two, the Premier made some vague comment about what was going to be discussed on that trip to China. I heard vague words around what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade was going to be doing over there and saying over there—something to the effect of human rights, so I wanted to address that.

I also want to address the Premier's statement that he met with the Dalai Lama. Last November, His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Toronto. My office tried repeatedly to find out if the Premier would meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We not only spoke to him, we also spoke to the Lieutenant Governor. We were working closely with the Tibetan community in Ontario, and we got a negative response.

We then proceeded to try to plan to hold a reception for His Holiness. After all, this is a Nobel Prize winner. He is the head of state. It's a state in exile, but he's still the head of state. We felt that it was the duty of the government of Ontario, just like the government of Canada had done and just like the government of the United States had done, to meet with His Holiness, to actually accord him and the Tibetan people that dignity. They refused. We were going to continue to open up this House, presumably of democracy, to His Holiness and his advisers. The advisers then told His Holiness that they would not want to meet here unless the Premier met with them, because His Holiness would consider that a snub.

I'd like to know when the Premier actually did meet with His Holiness, because it certainly wasn't this last

November when we asked him to. So I'd like some clarification on that.

Also, the clarification around what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade will be doing or saying in China when she goes—this most secretive of trips that, again, this government chose not to broadcast like they did the trip to India, which was broadcast with all the fanfare of a royal retinue. Or the trip to Tokyo—ditto. I remember the comments about Tokyo Rose.

We knew about those trips. We didn't know about this one. We had to dig and, again, we still don't know when she's going. We're trying to get information out of her executive assistant, to no avail. The Tibetans are trying to get a meeting with her, to no avail up to now. Let's hope that changes.

These are the three requests we have of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. They're not mine alone; they're those of Tibetans around the world and Amnesty International:

(1) ask that foreign journalists be let into the country of Tibet;

(2) stop the arbitrary arrests, incarcerations and, I would add, murders of Tibetans;

(3) ask the Chinese government to sit down and negotiate with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Now, I believe the people of Ontario who are listening would think these are pretty modest requests for a people like the Tibetans in exile. They're not asking a great deal. Would it be so much for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, now that we've discovered she's going to actually do the human thing, the right thing, and ask this of the Chinese officials she meets? David Miller has said he would. David Miller has sent a very strongly worded letter to the Chinese embassy, again because we asked him to. Will she?

I close, finally, with a quote that we all know, that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing. In that spirit, I appeal also to the backbenchers in the Liberal caucus, I appeal to Tories, I appeal to us all. This is not about partisan politics. This is about doing the right thing for people who are being murdered and incarcerated as we speak. You have the power to do something. Are you going to use it? She has the power to say something. Is she going to say it?

**Mr. David Ramsay:** I'm pleased to represent Premier McGuinty today in response to the question from the member for Parkdale–High Park. We take this issue very seriously. As you know, the federal government is in charge of foreign policy in this country. As a province, we take the lead of the federal government.

Every day in this House opposition parties and members stand up in their place and criticize this government for not creating jobs, for not expanding the economy. What we're doing is engaging our second-largest trading partner. Ontario is a trade jurisdiction. That is a big part, a majority part, of our economy in this province. We're blessed to be a trading jurisdiction in Ontario and China is the second-largest trading partner.

We continue with the constructive engagement that is the policy of this country, which Canada was a pioneer in with countries like Cuba and China, to engage them at all levels, whether economic or political. Through that, we are able to create understanding and to transfer our beliefs through those relationships. We continue to do that.

I was very shocked when the member interrupted the Premier in his response. The Premier stated how he had met with the Dalai Lama and all of a sudden the member opposite said, "You did not," and interrupted the Premier.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** In what decade? In what decade did he meet with the Dalai Lama?

**Mr. David Ramsay:** When the Premier was first elected, the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario had given the Premier notice that in the following spring, in May 2004, the Dalai Lama would be in Ontario and presented him with an official invitation. I have pictures here of the Premier with the Dalai Lama. I can give that to the member afterwards.

You referred to a trip when the Dalai Lama came to Ontario last fall. There was no formal invitation to the Premier of Ontario at that time. I understand that some of our members met with him—the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I believe. But there was no formal invitation from the Dalai Lama. Of course, the Premier, as he had before, would obviously have been willing and wanting to welcome the Dalai Lama to Ontario. So he's done that and is very supportive of the Dalai Lama.

I would just say to the member that I would hope you would believe the word of the Premier when he said he has met him. I will send those pictures over there. I would say to the member that we think it's very important to continue that engagement with China, our second-largest trade partner. It's the proper way to go. At that time, our trade minister is going to be able to engage the country on all issues.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** This House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1804.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

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Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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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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