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Wednesday 15 October 2008

Mercredi 15 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the universal prayer of the Hindus.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Pursuant to standing order 8(d), there being no business this morning, I ask that the House be recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 8(d), this House is recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 0904 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: It's a privilege for me to stand in the House today to welcome guests from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who are here for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry day. I know that many ministers have opened their doors to meetings today, and I appreciate that. I would like to invite this House and the guests to attend a reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230, where we will feature everything that makes Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry a great place to live, work and play.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to introduce a group of young people who are here from Venezuela: from the National Committee of the Roofless, Luis Gascuez; and from the Afro-Venezuelan Network, Ricardo Scott, Alberto Antonio and Juan Carlos Lombardo. Welcome to Toronto.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: We have in the gallery the grade 10 class from St. Augustine Catholic High School in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further guests to introduce, it is now time for oral questions. If I may, for just one moment, I want to remind the members that the new revised standing orders are in your desks, so you have them available to you for your perusal.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Working families and seniors in the province of Ontario

are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, let alone in today's economic circumstances. Premier, can you stand up and guarantee Ontario families that there will be no new taxes or tax increases in your upcoming economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll let the Minister of Finance speak to the particulars, but what I can say is that we intend to do what families do in the face of economic challenges at home. They certainly don't look for ways to incur new costs, and they certainly wouldn't welcome new expenses—things that are beyond their control—but they do what they have to when it comes to tightening things up and looking at ways to demonstrate restraint. If there are undertakings we've made with respect to new initiatives, then we'll do as families do: We'll look for ways to delay some of those, so that we can proceed in a thoughtful and responsible way. We'll take our cue from Ontario families. I think the most direct thing I can say to my colleague opposite is that I know that families would not be looking forward to undue expenditures imposed upon them by any level of government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously, working families are facing higher grocery prices. They're facing higher hydro fees, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. They're facing higher taxes, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. They're facing skyrocketing assessment increases this month, leading to property tax increases, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. Of course they won't welcome it.

What I want you to do, though—the buck stops at your desk. Would you please stand in the assembly today and say there will be no tax increases and no new taxes in the upcoming economic statement and, as well, no new user fees or user fee increases?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There will be no new taxes and no new fees in the upcoming economic statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, I wish I had asked that question back before Dalton McGuinty brought in the biggest tax increase in the history of our country, despite promises to the contrary.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now, now, let's hold on a second here—I think the members opposite realize that while Dalton McGuinty says there's no new tax or fee increases, he is bringing in a brand new electronics tax on the backs of working families and seniors in the province of Ontario. Just like Ontario families soundly rejected your friend Stéphane Dion's carbon tax—simply a tax

hike gussied up in a green cloak—you're bringing in a new tax on appliances, on microwaves, on TVs and on tires.

Given the Premier's sudden concern for working families, will you stand up now, Premier, and say that you're going to scrap that ill-advised new tax on electronic goods in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I won't do that, and I know my colleague opposite understands that. We certainly feel on this side of the House that we can both grow this economy—we can do everything we possibly can muster in the context of a serious global economic challenge, but we don't feel that we can give up our responsibility to address environmental issues at the same time. So we're going to have to do something about all those tires that we bury in the province of Ontario; we're going to have to do something about that electronic waste.

We've put forward some thoughtful policies. There are some costs associated with that—I will not deny that—but I think that families also understand that in their interests and in the interests of their children and grandchildren, we have got to come to grips with the waste that we're producing. So we move forward in thoughtful, responsible and, I believe, affordable ways to deal with those issues.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Would you agree that increases in business tax rates lead to job losses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We believe that taxes are a real issue for our businesses and that's why they're part of our plan. So far we've managed to reduce business taxes by \$1.5 billion; fully implemented, we'll be saving Ontario businesses some \$3 billion. My friend opposite knows, as I said several times over, that if we take a look at the discrimination being visited upon Ontarians, on Canadians living in Ontario by Ottawa, we could do more if we were allowed to keep more of our own money, and one of the areas that we could address together would be the level of tax competitiveness for Ontario businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier claims that business taxes have come down. I think he believes our memories are very short. Premier, you remember in your first budget, in the largest tax increase in the history of our province, you increased business taxes to make Ontario the most uncompetitive jurisdiction in North America when it comes to tax rates on new business investment. You increased the tax on small businesses. You increased the tax on all businesses, and you brought in a delay of the capital tax in the province. And the result: 200,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs have fled the province of Ontario under the Dalton McGuinty government—John Deere, 800 jobs recently; Volvo in Goderich, 500 jobs.

Premier, I'll ask you as well: Will you correct the mistake you made early in your mandate by jacking up

business taxes and commit to a schedule of business tax reductions in your economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend remembers certain things, and even those things that he remembers, I don't recall, but I do remember a \$5.6-billion deficit. That's shown in the public accounts, so that is real.

My colleague opposite knows that we've also done a number of things to help the competitiveness of Ontario businesses when it comes to the levels of taxation. He's dead wrong when he continues to say somehow that we are the least competitive jurisdiction in all North America, and he knows better than that. We have, in fact, a lower combined corporate tax rate than any US state, and I know that my friend recognizes that.

We've also acted to raise the small business tax exemption. We have reduced the business education tax, and we continue to do that, and we've completely eliminated the capital tax for our manufacturers and others who find themselves in the resource-based industries in Ontario.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's not just me or the Progressive Conservative caucus; it's your own adviser, Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management, who comes forward and says that Ontario under Dalton McGuinty is the least competitive jurisdiction, when it comes to business investment, in all of North America.

The Premier clearly does not understand that lowering the tax and regulatory burden on our businesses will actually increase tax revenue in Ontario by helping to create new jobs that are needed in our province. In fact, economist Jack Mintz recently showed that a 1% reduction in Ontario's corporate income tax rate would actually raise federal and provincial revenues by some 18%.

Premier, since a very modest decrease in corporate taxes can have an enormous benefit for Ontario families, help to create jobs, and at the same time increase government revenues to invest in health care and education, will you please stand in your place and confirm that you'll have a schedule of business tax reductions in your economic statement next week?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend opposite and several of his colleagues in his caucus have talked about Roger Martin's advice. I listen carefully when Roger Martin speaks, and he has spoken to the issue of tax competitiveness, but he's also spoken over the years about a number of other issues as well. He has said, for example, that we should eliminate the capital tax; we've done that for our manufacturers and resource-based industries. He said that we should focus on increasing apprenticeships; we have 50,000 more young people in the province of Ontario today enrolled in our apprenticeship programs. He specifically said we need to address the dropout rate in the province of Ontario; we've got 10,000 more young people graduating every single year. He said we needed to increase in post-secondary education generally; we've got a \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan in place. So what I draw to my friend's

attention is that he does speak to the issue of taxation, but he speaks to many other issues as well, understanding that in order to be competitive, you've got to look at the whole picture.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The Premier spent a lot of time over the last couple of months talking about his so-called fairness campaign. He wanted people to put up lawn signs and sign his online petition. In a province of 13 million, only 15,000 people bothered to sign the Premier's online petition. Will the Premier now admit that his so-called fairness campaign was a dismal failure and was nothing more than a superficial diversion from the McGuinty government's failure to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to first of all thank my colleague opposite and all the members of this Legislature for their support in the resolution that we put forward in this House. I want to thank the Ontarians who took some initiative to speak out on behalf of fairness issues. My colleague seems not to have grown enthusiastic about this initiative, and I hope that he develops some enthusiasm. If he doesn't find that in terms of the information that I put forward, I recommend again that he review the TD Economics report, which specified that Canadians living in Ontario are visited with \$11.8 billion by way of discrimination from Ottawa. I think that's a real issue; I think it's a pressing issue. We will continue to press this with all 106 newly elected MPs in the House of Commons.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: On the contrary; the real issue is the 230,000 manufacturing jobs and the 40,000 forest sector jobs that have been lost in this province, and the only answer from the McGuinty government is a phony online petition campaign that gets only 15,000 signatures in a province of 13 million people.

I think the Premier needs to look at the election results. Voters in Welland decided that there's a jobs crisis; voters in Thunder Bay sent a message that there's a jobs crisis; voters in Windsor sent a message that there's a jobs crisis; voters in Sudbury, voters in Timmins, voters in Sault Ste. Marie sent a message that there's a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I want to thank the members for their interjections and talking about different ridings, but I would like to be able to hear the honourable member ask his question.

Mr. Howard Hampton: All of those voters certainly recognize that there's a jobs crisis in Ontario. When are the Premier and the McGuinty government going to wake up to the fact that there's a jobs crisis in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague fails to see the important connection between our fairness case and our ability to lend further support to folks, particularly in the manufacturing sectors, who are being caught up in the tremendous—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: He fails to see the connection between our ability to lend assistance to families caught up in this tremendous global economic dislocation, particularly in the manufacturing sector, and our fairness campaign. We are sending, according to the TD Economics report, some \$20 billion annually to Ottawa for distribution in other provinces to enable them to provide more support to their industries—to further reduce their corporate taxes, for example. They specify the number as being \$11.8 billion in actual discrimination. If we could keep just a bit more of our own money, then we could do more to lend more help to our manufacturers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about everything other than the loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario. I wonder when the McGuinty government is going to get it. You are losing manufacturing jobs and forest sector jobs in this province at a rate that is not rivalled anywhere else in Canada, yet the Premier wants to talk about his petition campaign that garnered only 15,000 signatures despite the fact that it's the only thing the Premier has talked about for the last 45 days. How many jobs have to be lost in Ontario before the McGuinty government recognizes you've got a crisis on your hands and an online petition campaign doesn't do one wink of a thing about solving that jobs crisis? How long is it going to take?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I know it's in my honourable colleague's interest to somehow portray our campaign for fairness as being the only thing that we're doing here, but I want to remind him about our five-point plan, and in particular how it speaks to manufacturing concerns.

Fourteen per cent of Ontario jobs are found in manufacturing, so it remains a very important job base for us here. To help our manufacturing base grow stronger, we know they've got to make a transition to a point where they are more competitive. They need more highly skilled and educated workers. We're on to that with our Reaching Higher plan. They need to be able to buy the latest equipment and technology. We're on to that with our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. They need to take advantage of new ideas and innovation. That's what the Ministry of Research and Innovation is all about, at \$1.5 billion in new investments. They need more competitive taxes. That's why we've cut them by \$1.5 billion. They need to know they've got a government that's in their corner and that's prepared to partner with them. That's what our Next Generation of Jobs Fund is all about. Finally, they need good infrastructure so that they can speed their goods to the marketplace. We're all over that as well.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The Premier mentions once again the McGuinty government's five-point plan. Let me tell you, John Deere thought so much

of your five-point plan that they announced the layoff of hundreds of workers in Welland. Volvo thought so much of your five-point plan that they've announced the layoff of over 500 workers in Goderich. And Daimler Trucks in St. Thomas thought so much of your five-point plan that they've just announced the layoff of 1,300 workers. Anybody who is watching knows that there are more layoffs to come as all of the parts makers in the St. Thomas area lay off more workers.

Premier, these companies obviously aren't impressed with your five-point plan. If they were, they wouldn't be laying off thousands of workers every week. What is the McGuinty government strategy, other than talking about an online petition that gets 15,000 signatures—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just won't allow myself to be overcome by despair, as is evident in my colleague opposite. He's prepared to throw in the towel. He's saying that when it comes to the \$11.8-billion discrimination visited on Canadians living in Ontario, he's prepared to give up. When it comes to job losses, he says there's more to come and there's nothing that he can do.

I'm not in that camp. I understand this is a difficult, very challenging time for Ontarians when it comes to what's happening in the global economy and particularly when it comes to what's happening to our manufacturing sector. This has been seen in the US, the UK and Australia. They've gone from 18% of their jobs to 10% of their jobs. We still have 14% of our jobs in the manufacturing sector, and we'll continue to fight as hard as we possibly can to retain every single one of those jobs. But it would be good to know, from time to time, when it comes to a fundamental issue like fairness, that the leader of the NDP was on the side of Ontario workers.

1050

Mr. Howard Hampton: The people who are feeling despair are the laid-off workers: the laid-off workers who look at your so-called Second Careers jobs plan and are only signing up for 10% of the spaces; the laid-off workers who know that your so-called five-point plan doesn't offer them anything either.

We tabled some amendments to the Premier's economy resolution. I want to ask the Premier if he's prepared to support any of them: an industrial hydro rate to help manufacturers; a jobs commissioner to help at-risk companies; and a Buy Ontario policy, especially in the transit sector, so we can help sustain manufacturing jobs. Is the Premier prepared to act on any of those things to help sustain manufacturing jobs, or does he want to talk about his 15,000-signature online petition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's an ongoing debate, and I look forward to the conclusion of that debate and then taking a look at all of the ideas put forward by all members of this House. But let's do a bit of compare-and-contrast here. My friend opposite is suggesting that we need to put in place in Ontario a jobs commissioner. They tried that in BC. That didn't work and they got rid of it. On the other hand, he is critical of our program to reach out to 20,000 Ontarians who have lost their jobs

recently and to offer them up to two years of publicly subsidized retraining.

I know we're having a challenge in terms of attracting people in great numbers to that. I know it's tough, if you're 52 and you've lost the job and you've got a mortgage and you've got a couple of kids, to go back to work for a couple of years. But we're looking at ways to improve that program, to make it more attractive to Ontarians who have lost their jobs. We know that in order to help transition our manufacturing sector, we've got to continue to upgrade the skills and education levels of our workers. That's why we're so committed to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier needs to look at his own fiction. The jobs commissioner was credited with helping to sustain almost 100,000 jobs in British Columbia. It was the new Liberal government that got rid of it, a new Liberal government there that doesn't have a jobs plan either.

The Premier says that a jobs commissioner wouldn't work. Well, Premier, I think it's better than anything you've come up with. But I mentioned an industrial hydro rate; I mentioned a Buy Ontario strategy; I mentioned, for example, tougher plant closure legislation. These are all part of an NDP amendment before the Legislature. Is the Premier prepared to vote for them and put them in place in Ontario so we can actually do something practical to help sustain jobs in Ontario, or is the Premier going to go on talking about his 15,000-signature online petition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member mentioned a Buy Ontario plan, and he should know that over 80% of the investment that we're making in public transit will result in dollars being spent here in the province of Ontario for our businesses and our workers.

Hon. George Smitherman: He's against public transit.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: He was against investing in more public transit.

He made reference earlier on to Thunder Bay. But just to give you an example of the continuing partnerships that we're striking, today, Minister Cansfield is in Thunder Bay. She's announcing a new investment in Abitibi-Bowater. This government is putting in \$1.5 million to help the company increase its energy efficiency. That efficiency will help the company secure about 350 well-paying jobs. It's a good example of government working hand in hand with industry in difficult economic times to secure good Ontario jobs.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Ontarians gave a stronger mandate to Prime Minister Harper and the Conservative Party, and they also provided 11 more seats. Yesterday, as well, both Dion and Layton indicated that in light of the economic challenges facing this country, they were prepared to work in co-operation with the Prime Minister.

I'm asking you today, Premier: Are you prepared to put aside your partisan fairness campaign and work cooperatively with the federal government on behalf of all Ontarians in order that we can benefit and keep the jobs in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity to congratulate, first of all, all those who presented themselves as candidates in this recent federal election. I congratulate all the leaders. I congratulate Prime Minister Harper on his success and I look forward to working with him and his government. But in particular, I'll be bringing some particular focus to 106 newly elected Ontario MPs, and I need them to do what MPs representing other provinces do on a regular basis and without hesitation, and that is, from time to time, to stand up on behalf of the folks who sent them in the first place.

There is a real issue—and I know I have my colleague's support on this. It has to do with this \$11.8-billion unfairness or, to use the wording of the TD Economics report, "discrimination visited on Canadians living in the province of Ontario." I know I can count on my colleague's support when it comes to that particular issue.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the Premier: There is an opportunity for us to make a fresh start. The people have spoken, it's time to move forward, and the opposition has indicated their willingness to work with the government in light of the economic challenges that face our province and our country.

People in this province expect us to work in cooperation. I ask you today: What new steps are you prepared to take to work in cooperation with the federal government to ensure that Ontarians retain their jobs and have access to new jobs in order that they can continue to have the quality of life we enjoy in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I look forward to working with the federal government. I can say that I will be attending a meeting of the Premiers and Ministers of Finance representing the various provinces and territories in Montreal this coming Monday. We will gather together to assess the new landscape when it comes to federal politics and chart a course that is designed to ensure that we cooperate with the federal government so that we can together come to grips with these financial challenges.

I can say as well that I appreciate the spirit of cooperation and collegiality offered by my colleague opposite, but I think one of the things that we have got to stand strong on is this whole issue of fairness. We cannot escape out from under this; it is real. I can tell you, in every other province and every other territory they wouldn't allow it to happen. We need to come together, we need to stick together and we need to press the case in particular with 106 newly elected Ontario MPs—and I congratulate them once again.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, as we speak here today in the Legislature,

hard-working Ontarians are getting more nasty surprises in the mail. All across Ontario, property owners are receiving assessment increases averaging 20%, and property taxes are going up for many Ontarians at a time when property values across the province are starting to fall; they're in decline.

Mr. Premier, will you admit that it's time to do away with the market-based approach, which your party has embraced, and turn to the NDP's freeze-till-sale assessment model? We believe it's an idea whose time has come.

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

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member, as a former mayor, surely realizes that an assessment increase does not equate automatically to a tax increase. He knows that; anyone who served in municipal government or who receives an assessment notice knows that. That's point number one.

Secondly, we very much appreciate the input from the Ombudsman, who brought forward a series of recommendations. Those recommendations have now been implemented. Let me quote the Ombudsman's 2008 report. He said, "The Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and the government have come closer to Getting It Right ... by implementing my recommendations for re-forming property assessment in Ontario...."

"Newly introduced legislation will bring greater fairness to the system of property assessment and appeal."

We respect the Ombudsman's work, we acted on his recommendations and we believe that the municipal governments have the tools necessary to ensure an orderly transition—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: To the minister: As a former mayor and a minister, he must surely realize as well that anyone whose property tax goes up above the average for the municipality invariably will get a tax increase. We are suggesting in our freeze-till-sale model that property taxes be frozen until the time they are sold. This would ensure that seniors and others on fixed incomes are not forced out of their homes and away from friends and families.

Will the minister admit that it is precisely at the time of mass layoffs and declining property values that Ontario should reject the Conservative-inspired market-based approach to property taxes and bring in an assessment model that puts people first?

1100

Hon. Jim Watson: First of all, I would challenge the honourable member to bring forward one jurisdiction in Canada that has his frozen-until-sale model, because, quite frankly, that would bring even greater inequities into the system.

Secondly, he talks passionately now about supporting senior citizens. Where was he and where was his party when this government brought forward a senior citizens' property tax credit? They voted against it. They turned

their back on senior citizens, and now, in feigned outrage, they're concerned about seniors. You should have been there for the vote, and you should have voted with us to bring forward a senior citizens' tax credit.

Finally, the municipalities, particularly his own municipality, have benefited from \$238 million in investment in Ontario funds for infrastructure in his city. What did he do when that money was in the budget? He voted against it. Shame on the NDP.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, first, I know that you will join me in welcoming the representatives of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who are here at Queen's Park today.

As MPP for the riding, I have had the privilege of hosting most of cabinet in my riding. I think the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is perhaps the only one who has not been to visit and I certainly encourage him to come down and experience our hospitality.

Those ministers who have had the opportunity to see the good work being done to foster a complete renaissance in my riding have been quite impressed. They have had the chance to meet with community leaders, many of whom are here today, and discuss with them first-hand their plan for community growth.

Many communities across the province, including those smaller communities, face challenges investing in their infrastructure priorities. How is this government helping municipalities invest in the important infrastructure in their communities?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to join with my honourable friend in acknowledging and welcoming the good folks from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I had a chance to meet with them this morning. We welcome them to the Legislature.

Levels of infrastructure investment in our province this year are unprecedented, and many of those are programs focused particularly at smaller communities. In the Cornwall area, we have one project, as an example, the McConnell/CN bridge rehabilitation project, which is part of our MIII program, which put \$450 million into communities. As part of the Investing in Ontario Act, announced at the AMO meeting in August, \$1.1 billion is being provided to area municipalities, more than \$10 million of that in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. We've also launched, with the government of Canada, the first component of the communities fund of the Building Canada fund. Closing on November 21, it will put \$200 million—\$100 million from the province and \$100 million from the federal government—to be matched by one third contributions from the smaller municipalities; all part and parcel of the largest investments in infrastructure—

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: Minister, I think you have probably been the minister who has visited my riding the

most, and I certainly know that you have been a steady friend to myself and my constituents.

One of the things I love to hear when you, our colleagues and anyone else comes on a repeated basis to the community in my riding is, "Wow, there's been a lot of positive change around here." Credit for that goes to the dedication and groundbreaking work being done by community groups and the municipalities themselves. I would certainly like to congratulate them on the good work they are doing.

As our infrastructure improves, businesses are looking at our corner of Ontario as a great place to establish next-generation industry, particularly in terms of renewable energy. Minister, can you tell us what our government is doing to encourage this type of development in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry?

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I would like to acknowledge the extent to which the R.H. Saunders generating station in Cornwall is such an important asset in the Ontario energy supply mix, with hydroelectric capacity operating since 1958 at more than 1,000 megawatts.

Exciting progress is being made as well through initiatives of the Ministry of Research and Innovation, who are working with Verdant Power Canada for a green energy project to use innovative water turbines to tap even more of the powerful capacities of the St. Lawrence and other rivers in Ontario. We want to maximize our potential to take advantage of those sources of energy which do not have a fuel source, which are not carbon-related. Accordingly, rivers, like the progress that I mentioned before at R.H. Saunders, are very essential to the new generation of green-collar jobs. We're going to continue to work to build on the 530 megawatts of additional renewable capacity that has already been installed, supporting innovative projects like the one that's ongoing in the—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Premier. Because of your government's policies, hundreds of new and young farmers were cheated out of the support they deserve. When your Minister of Finance releases his statement, can you assure us there will be support for these farmers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our government certainly values the agriculture industry and our producers, and we have been there for them over the last four years. That is why our government has spent \$1.1 billion in extraordinary money—money that was not in our budget—over the last four years.

A year ago, on December 12, the Minister of Finance announced \$150 million to support the cattle, hog and horticulture industries—the only province in Canada to provide this kind of support to those struggling sectors. We consulted with the stakeholders in those sectors. We

took their advice. They said they needed the money as soon as possible. We used the information we had in our system, and we had those cheques to farmers, \$130 million for cattle and hog and horticulture—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: You gave out a lot of money, and the hog producers said they needed it very quickly. Their job was to get it out quickly. Your job was to see that it went to the right people, and you failed miserably on that front.

These farmers create jobs in the rural economy. Some of them are spending millions of dollars a year and hiring numerous people in our rural community. They don't understand why your government won't help them so they can continue farming. You're helping others, but you're not helping these farmers—hundreds of them—who got absolutely nothing out of all that money you're talking about.

Can you assure us that the Minister of Finance will include in the economic statement a way of supporting these farmers, who so far have got absolutely nothing from you?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that I take this opportunity to say that our government has provided \$150 million in extraordinary money, which no other province in this nation did. Any farmer who participated in the federal cost of production top-up and would have had application by September 2007 would have qualified for a payment on the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture program. We have rolled that money out in record time. We have delivered what the agriculture community said they needed most to address long-standing losses in those sectors. I have letters from stakeholders to thank this government for our prompt response. We have been there for farmers in the province of Ontario for the last five years, and we will continue to be there for farmers—

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

CHILD ABUSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: Last week, two men were arrested for the alleged sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl who stayed at Benevenga Day Care in Etobicoke. Parents in the area simply want to know why this child care centre is still operating.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, we put a huge amount of importance on the safety of our children. When they are in a licensed child care setting, we do everything we can to ensure the safety of our children. We continue to strengthen the child care system. We've added spaces, and we continue to improve the quality of care in those centres.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, last week it was the principal, Edmonda Gilfillan, of the nearby Venerable John Merlini school, who took it upon herself to send a

letter to parents and guardians making them aware of the serious situation. Not this minister, but the principal of a nearby school had to inform the community. The community sees a huge vacuum in the ministry's monitoring, or lack thereof, or enforcement, or lack thereof, of these kinds of unlicensed facilities in the province. They've asked me to ask this minister why the McGuinty government won't close down a child care centre where police allege child abuse has occurred.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's important to note that this is not a licensed child care facility. When a centre is licensed, we of course have a very high standard of care. When a centre is unlicensed, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure the safety of their children. So the onus is on parents, when it is an unlicensed facility, to take responsibility.

1110

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got question today for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. My riding of Oakville, as you know, is a home to many successful small and medium-sized businesses. Oakville has got a thriving chamber of commerce and three business improvement areas. All these businesses are a vital part of our economy. They provide local jobs. They turn great ideas into products and services.

Often, I hear from many small business owners who are expressing concern with government forms and red tape. What is the government doing to help? How can we help so that small and medium-sized business owners can focus more on making their business a success and less on filling out forms?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Oakville for asking this question. Almost 98% of the businesses in Ontario are actually small businesses. They create over 50% of the jobs in Ontario in the private sector and about \$250 billion worth of economic activity, so they are definitely the engine of economic growth in Ontario.

We are very committed to making sure that they spend most of their time not filling out government forms, but rather focusing on their business. That's why a special secretariat has been created, and in my supplementary I will be able to tell the member what we have done in terms of reducing the burden for the business forms and how we have automated all the business forms for small business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Under previous governments, red tape was allowed to grow, regulations grew and paperwork grew. Small business expressed their concern through the small business agency, and small businesses, including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, expressed specific concern with the paper burden that applies to small business.

Minister, would you explain to this House and to small business owners all across Ontario how you plan to reduce paper burden in Ontario for small business?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for asking the question. For the last three years, we have been moving in a systematic way to reduce the paper burden for small and medium-sized business. In phase one, seven key ministries reduced the paperwork by about 24 percentage points. In the second phase, another eight ministries reduced the paperwork burden by more than 25% in their ministries. And in the third phase, 10 ministries are working diligently to reduce paperwork more in their own ministries.

Not only have we reduced the paperwork, but we have also automated a lot of the paperwork, so that the small and medium-sized businesses don't have to fill out the same information again and again. We are also working on cap and trade so that the rules and regulations stay where they are—and, if anything, that they should be reduced—and that businesses can focus on the business rather than on filling out forms.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. In 1885, the famous circus elephant Jumbo was killed in St. Thomas, crushed by a locomotive. Today, another giant has died in St. Thomas, crushed by the economic downturn which plagues Ontario's manufacturing sector. Daimler has announced it will close the Sterling truck plant next year, leaving 1,400 people without jobs. And in nearby Tillsonburg, at DDM Plastics, more than 400 people lost their jobs last week.

Premier, the five-point plan you love so much is not working in southwestern Ontario. It is an outdated plan, not relevant to the new economic realities of the present. When you release your economic statement on October 22, can we expect a new plan for Ontario's new era?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'll give the member the benefit of the doubt with respect to the analogy, but I don't think it's an attempted joke that would find much laughter in the community of St. Thomas. Obviously it is a very difficult time for many workers and for many citizens. That is why this government is reaching out and seeking to work with labour, management, the mayor and our local member of provincial Parliament in trying to do everything that the province can, firstly to see if there is a way in which an alternative might come about that would see those jobs stay in St. Thomas, and secondly, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to work with those people who face this—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Just like Jumbo, I think I hear the train a-coming. Ontario's manufacturing sector is a train wreck. On the one hand, the minister pretends to be flexible, engaging the opposition in a partisan and inappropriate economic debate. But when asked, the minister shows that he has no intention of changing course, no plan for a new economic era in Ontario. In southwestern Ontario, where the former PC government helped to

attract thousands of jobs through policies that adapted to the times, families and communities are suddenly insecure.

Minister, last night, many Ontarians voted for change. Will you heed their advice and give Ontario a new economic plan?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The question was about the news in St. Thomas, so I'll not—as much as I'd like to—jump on the member's political commentary on the result. The mayor has said—I think, helpfully—in the event that it is the case that those jobs cannot be saved, that does not mean there cannot be, through entrepreneurship, small businesses and through skills training, new jobs—second-generation jobs for Ontario. That's why this government has a second-generation jobs fund that makes those investments to allow those new companies to expand or, in fact, to be established. That's why this government has an advanced manufacturing loan program to allow this. That's why this government has the Ontario Centres of Excellence to help some of these enterprises to start. That is the plan of this—

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

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy: The government's electricity planners have once again grossly overestimated electricity demand growth in order to make the case to build new and expensive nuclear power plants. Ontario teeters on the verge of a recession and electricity demand is declining further. Your government admits that it's facing a budget crisis and it might not be able to meet its core commitments, such as reducing poverty. Can the minister tell us when the government will revise its electricity forecast to reflect the real demand for energy, so that billions of dollars of taxpayers' money are not wasted producing energy that's not needed?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the backhanded compliment at the success that has been made to date with respect to conservation in the province of Ontario. Through the good work of the Ontario Power Authority and local distribution companies, and through the efforts of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians, it's true to be able to say that there's a demonstrated reduction in some of the energy needs in the province of Ontario. Of course, it's prudent to always keep one's eye on the progress of that matter.

The honourable member did make a misstatement, I think, with respect to nuclear power. It's our government's intention to continue to ensure going forward that Ontario has a reliable supply of nuclear power in about the exact amount as we've had it here for a good number of decades. This is providing Ontarians with a very reliable and relatively inexpensive form of power.

In supplementary, I'll be happy to talk to the honourable member about the advances that we are making in expanding renewable sources of energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister is talking about a drop in demand far beyond what his planners predicted. Yet he's continuing to go forward with plans to build more expensive nuclear power. He knows that more jobs can be created with renewable power, more jobs with conservation, and more opportunities in a world where the new energy economy is developing. Why are you clinging so hard to a nuclear future?

1120

Hon. George Smitherman: What the honourable member is afraid to acknowledge is that it's not about a nuclear future; it's about the reality of our nuclear past and present. What we're seeking to do is to ensure that, going forward, our fleet of nuclear power plants is able to produce, relatively speaking, the same level of energy that they have for a couple of decades in the province of Ontario. But we're eliminating coal. This is a very, very important step, and it's the opportunity that provides us with expansion of renewable energy—to date, about 530 megawatts of installed renewable, and thousands of additional megawatts of renewable energy in the pipeline.

I've asked those who developed the integrated power system plan to take a harder look as to whether we might actually encourage even greater contribution of renewable energy in Ontario's supply mix, and that work is ongoing at present.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Just recently, a couple in my riding gave birth to their son, who was born at 26 weeks, weighing barely one pound, seven ounces. When babies are born this prematurely, they require significant medical attention and critical care. My constituents have heard stories of mothers having to be rushed south of the border to receive the special care that is required when babies are born prematurely.

What sort of reassurance can I provide to my constituents, and what is our government doing to support the delivery of healthy babies here in Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for London-Fanshawe for the question because our government is doing everything we can to make sure that our most vulnerable receive the care they need in the time that they need it.

In exceptional emergency circumstances, when acute, life-threatening circumstances require immediate services, our hospitals contact CritiCall to determine the next most suitable treatment bed. However, it is our government's priority to make sure that Ontarians receive the care they need here in Ontario. That's why we're investing \$7 million in a maternal-newborn access-to-care strategy. This investment will provide increased access to quality care and services for critically ill infants and their mothers. Part of this \$7-million funding will provide six more neonatal intensive care beds. These new beds will help 129 critically ill infants this year alone.

And soon, the province will screen for pre-term labour and for critical premature eye diseases, conditions which directly impact the health—

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Ensuring the best possible start in life for infants and children is not only a universal obligation driven by compassion, but it's one of the most practical means of ensuring a healthier population in the future. I know my constituents will be happy to learn that this government is taking great steps in this area.

While this investment provides peace of mind to expecting mothers, our government needs to continue to look out for our children as they grow. My constituents in London-Fanshawe would like to know what the government is doing for our youngest Ontarians when it comes to wait times and pediatric surgery in our hospitals. Our province currently focuses on wait times for key surgery for adults. The parents of my youngest constituents—what is our government doing for the youngest ones?

Hon. David Caplan: Along with the maternal-newborn access-to-care strategy, we're investing an additional \$7.2 million to increase pediatric surgeries in key specialty areas and to reduce wait times. That means more than 4,200 additional pediatric surgeries, including dental, eye, ear, nose and throat surgeries, as well as orthopaedic and urology surgeries.

Since we began focusing on pediatric wait times, we've seen wait times for pediatric surgeries drop by approximately 17%. In London—and I know the member from London-Fanshawe is interested—London Health Sciences will receive over \$480,000 for 164 additional cases. These surgical procedures were identified by the pediatric action committee as provincial priorities and include additional dental/oral surgeries, ophthalmology surgeries, plastic surgeries, urology, orthopedic, and ear, nose and throat.

Ontario is the first—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Ontario's tourism industry needs the Premier's help now. What new initiatives to support tourism will be included in next week's economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to have the opportunity today to speak to the House again about Ontario's competitiveness study, which is well under way. As members in the House know, last week we discussed the tourism summit that was held last week. It was very successful, and all the buzz at the tourism summit was about the great work that Greg Sorbara is doing on his competitiveness study across the province.

We anticipate that, with this study, we will have a game plan for the future of tourism in Ontario. We expect that the study will be released in the new year, and we

know that Mr. Sorbara is working very hard on behalf of all of the tourism stakeholders. He's also meeting with stakeholders that are not in the tourism industry but that have input into the industry. It's a well-thought-out study and it has a number of studies being integrated into his report. We look forward to and appreciate very much the work he is doing on behalf of the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The House should be aware of the fact that the tourism industry has offered numerous thoughtful, well-researched proposals which the government could act upon next week; for example, a new centre of excellence for tourism, working collaboratively, a best-of-the-best philosophy of continuous improvement, a tourism committee of cabinet, and many more.

The minister does not have to wait many more months for the member for Vaughan to complete his tourism study. What specific initiatives can the tourism industry expect in next week's economic statement, and will the government offer hope to this \$23-billion industry that employs 200,000 Ontarians?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In fact, we are not waiting; we have been investing. Since 2006, we have invested 14.5 million new dollars into the tourism industry. Just this year alone, we have been investing in Celebrate Ontario. We also initiated a new marketing initiative, There's No Place Like This, which has seen a 5% increase in domestic tourism this year.

We are investing in festivals across the province. Just this past Friday, I had the opportunity to be in Kitchener-Waterloo for Oktoberfest, where we had invested an additional \$260,000 in their new program, which was held a week before Oktoberfest. There were thousands of people out; it was a sunny day. To Leeanna Pendergast and John Milloy, thank you for the wonderful welcome. It was a great day to tap the keg and celebrate with the people of Kitchener-Waterloo—another great investment by this government into the tourism industry and into the festivals and attractions across the province.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Housing. A subsidiary of developer giant Geranium is asking the Ontario Municipal Board to force a citizens' group to cover the company's \$3.2-million legal bill. To say this claim will scare citizens' groups off from speaking out is a gross understatement. Why will you not intervene and support a community's democratic right and ability to challenge large developers?

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member would know that the matter is before the Ontario Municipal Board and it would be entirely inappropriate for me, as a minister of the crown, to comment on that specific case.

I can say that the history of the OMB is that it is authorized to award costs; it does very rarely, and when someone's conduct is clearly unreasonable, frivolous or in bad faith.

The other point is that this government, through OMB reform, in fact did a number of measures, including establishing the citizen liaison office that assists individuals appearing before the OMB. These are progressive measures; they're reasonable measures. But with respect to the specific case that the honourable member refers to, I cannot comment on that because it is before the board.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Clearly, the outcome of the hearing is less important than the fact that it's happening at all, and clearly the changes you've made to the OMB have not prevented this abuse of democracy. The developer is seeking costs to scare citizens' groups across the province away from public participation. The minister has been silent. As the Toronto Star put it, "Watson can't just sit on the sidelines forever." So I'm asking you again, Minister, why will you not intervene and support a community's democratic right and ability to challenge large developers?

Hon. Jim Watson: It's the same question; the honourable member will receive the same answer. If I were to intervene in this case, who would be the first up, ranting and raving and criticizing me for intervening in an OMB case? As the honourable member knows, the OMB is a quasi-judicial body, and it would be entirely inappropriate for a minister to intervene or to comment on a matter that is before the board.

We did make a number of significant changes. I commend my colleagues the Attorney General and my predecessor, who is now the Minister of the Environment, for the work they did in terms of establishing the citizens' liaison office. The quality of appointees that this government has put on the OMB is something I'm also particularly proud of. But for me to intervene in the case or to comment would be entirely inappropriate and I just won't do that.

1130

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Too often youth are shown in a negative light in the media. Most young people aren't involved in crime and are hard-working, but they need the opportunity to achieve their potential. Minister, what is our government doing to help kids achieve their potential and keep them away from crime?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for his relentless advocacy for better opportunities for kids in this province.

Under my predecessor at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Mary Anne Chambers, our government created the youth opportunities strategy to help youth in high-needs neighbourhoods have the opportunity to be successful. One component of the youth opportunities strategy is the youth in policing initiative. It's an incredible opportunity for youth from priority neighbourhoods in Ottawa, Toronto, London, Durham, Hamilton, Windsor and Thunder Bay to spend their summers working side by side with police officers.

Youth in the youth in policing initiative work in all areas of policing. For example, this summer, youth in the Toronto Police Service helped to catalogue and organize almost 3,000 stolen bicycles. The—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: There is no doubt that this is a valuable program. It's a great way for any youth to spend the summer, learning important skills, while at the same time earning money. It's also a great way for young people to become involved in their communities. Would the minister be good enough to tell us what the police have to say about this particular program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Not only do the program graduates rave about their experience and many of them start thinking about a career in policing, but the police are also huge supporters of the program and are extremely proud of their graduates. It's an opportunity for young people to learn more about the work police do, but it's also an opportunity for the police to learn more about young people in those high-priority neighbourhoods. I've spoken with several police who have participated in the program and they tell me it truly is a tremendous learning experience for them. Police love having young, eager people to work with them in the summer, and they also recognize that these youth become ambassadors of the police to other young people in those neighbourhoods.

The youth opportunities strategy helped over 1,800 youth find summer jobs this year, including the 162 participants in the youth in policing program. It's a great program that—

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

STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There appears to be some concern about the way the standing orders are taking place today. According to standing order 8(a), question period was to start at 10:35 a.m., according to the standing orders we've received. Question period started at 10:32 instead of 10:35, and I would ask to make sure there is some clarity so that individuals who are preparing for oral questions comply with the standing orders and that we are making sure that we're following the guidelines that are established for us.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: An excellent intervention. We're going to need to coordinate whether it's the lunar calendar or it's Greenwich Mean Time that we're going to apply it to.

I say to all members of the House, a five-minute bell will ring, as is in the standing orders. When the five-minute bell rings, it means that it's five minutes from question period beginning, although I bet that there will be some coordination of times and ensuring that the member from Oshawa's watch matches the Speaker's watch.

We appreciate the intervention—and I bet that question period will start at 10:35 in the future—and appreciate his keeping an eye on the clock.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: Of course, and New Democrats want to make it very clear that question period doesn't start until the Speaker starts it. Whenever the Speaker arrives and starts question period is the right time, as far as New Democrats are concerned, and variations in timepieces from member to member notwithstanding, we respect the leadership of the Speaker in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank all the honourable members. I will remind the House that standing order 36 says "up to five minutes" for the introduction of guests, and it's a bit of a presumption that maybe the full five minutes isn't needed. I do admit that, in trying to ensure the flow of the business of the House, I moved directly to question period, trying to make the best use of the time within this House.

I appreciate the point of order. I will watch the clock. I will remind members, too, that it says "up to five minutes," and that if anybody is going to go beyond the five minutes on introduction of guests, I will be shutting them down on that as well.

Thank you to the member from Oshawa and to the other two members as well.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Sarah Holman—she has had some guests here at the Legislature—today we'd like to welcome her mother, Suzanne Holman; her father, Tim Holman; her sister, Laura Holman; and her brother, Sean Holman.

As well, on behalf of Paige Weller, her guests today have been her uncle, Eric Clarke; her grandmother, Norma Weller; and her grandfather, Jim Weller.

We welcome those guests, and we welcome the re-enactors, who I'm assuming are from Cornwall. Welcome today.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Mr. Speaker, if I could make a statement in welcoming the interpreters from Upper Canada Village: It was going to be part of my statement this afternoon, but certainly we're very happy that they are going to be here to welcome everybody to the reception this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: Once again, I rise in this House to call upon the Minister of Health to expedite the approval for our new Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the township of Centre Wellington.

Last week, I spoke to the minister to follow up on the urgent letter I sent to him last month. Briefly, the situ-

ation is this: On September 11, I met with hospital representatives and ministry staff in the minister's boardroom. We made a strong case for moving the Groves proposal to the next stage of planning to get the project moving forward again. We are prepared to work in co-operation with the Waterloo-Wellington Local Health Integration Network, but the minister cannot use this as an excuse for further delay. Delays have plagued this project for far too long already. We have been working on this proposal in the township of Centre Wellington since 2001. Our communities are rightfully expecting progress, not new roadblocks.

I think I can safely say there is no hospital in Ontario that has stronger community support than Groves. I urge the minister to acknowledge that community support, approve our proposal/business case submission, and move us forward to the functional program stage of planning for the new hospital immediately.

BRAMPTON SAFE CITY ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today in the House to congratulate the city of Brampton for a top score of 20 out of 20 in the annual Safe Communities Canada report card released by the Safe Communities Foundation of Canada.

It was one year ago that Brampton was designated an international safe community by the World Health Organization in recognition of their capacity to deliver safety education and programs and a proven ability to work together with community partners. Brampton is one of 10 municipalities in North America and the first municipality in the greater Toronto area to achieve this designation.

The Brampton Safe City partnership was formed in 1997 and currently has 36 member agencies and citizens. This speaks to the high involvement level of the citizens of Brampton to ensure that their community is as safe as it can be. Programs and services are delivered in eight key areas, including children's safety, fire prevention, safety for seniors, workplace safety, emergency preparedness, road safety, crime reduction and violence prevention for youth.

Brampton has invested considerable time and effort to develop a culture of safety and injury prevention. They've worked hard to mobilize citizens to make a difference. Please join me in congratulating Brampton on its safe-city distinction.

KEN ROSS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "Good things grow in Ontario" is more than just a catchy jingle. It speaks to both locally grown produce in our province and the Ontario retailers who promote it in their grocery stores.

Today, Foodland Ontario will be honouring one such retailer, Ken Ross, owner of Ross' Your Independent Grocer in Barrhaven, with the Foodland Ontario Retailer Award. Ken and his produce manager, Gilles Laporte, are this year's gold category winners.

I can tell you why Ross' Your Independent Grocer is a gold category winner. Summer, winter, fall; rain, hail, snow or sleet; regardless of the weather or the season, their Ontario produce is the most bountifully, beautifully and proudly displayed.

The gold category award winners for best produce display also have a heart of gold. Ken and his wife, Kelly, have owned and operated Ross' Your Independent Grocer for six years now and have since given back almost \$1 million to our community through donations and allowing community groups to use their store as a fundraising venue.

Congratulations go out in this Ontario Legislature today to Ken and Kelly Ross, Gilles Laporte and, of course, all of the staff at Ross' Your Independent Grocer for winning the Foodland Ontario Retailer Award, and thank you to them for all that they do for the riding of Nepean-Carleton and the people they represent in Barrhaven.

RIDING OF STORMONT-DUNDAS-SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I am sure that all of us at one point in time have enjoyed a McIntosh apple, but did you know that the very first McIntosh apple tree was propagated in my riding at Dundela, Dundas county?

Did you know that Ontario's first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald, was born in St. Raphaels, Glengarry county?

You have likely enjoyed a movie starring the latest Hollywood star, Ryan Gosling, but did you know he was raised in Cornwall?

My riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has always been a hotbed of talent, ranging from authors to athletes, actors, businessmen and politicians. The leaders of my community—many with us here at the Legislature today—have time and again demonstrated the ability to turn adversity into opportunity. Thanks to their work and the support of this government, my riding is facing a renaissance on many fronts.

The people of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry have a proud and diverse heritage, ranging from First Nations to United Empire Loyalists, from home children to new Canadians. They have added to the fabric of our communities.

I encourage everyone here in this Legislature and in the precinct to come out and learn more about my riding, be welcomed by interpreters from Upper Canada Village and meet with the community leaders first-hand at the Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry Day reception today between 5 and 8 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230. I welcome you all and hope that you will attend.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, you and the other members today have learned of yet another community suffering the loss of manufacturing jobs. The closing of

the Daimler AG plant in St. Thomas next year will cost approximately 1,300 jobs. The families will be devastated.

Last June, the members will recall an announcement that the award-winning GM truck plant in Oshawa would be closing in July 2009. This means the loss of approximately 2,600 jobs, many in my riding of Durham.

This House must, at this time, recognize that each plant closure is a devastating loss for the communities and the families they represent. What's disturbing is the lack of an effective plan from the McGuinty government for the recovery of the manufacturing sector in Ontario. The losses of jobs in my riding and indeed across Ontario, not just St. Thomas, will not be solved by ignoring the problem.

In the federal election, Prime Minister Harper explained his \$8.6-billion focused, achievable plan for responding to Canada's economic challenges. This plan includes initiatives to create jobs, support manufacturing and support small business.

I urge this House and the Premier to work together with our federal and local governments to repair and renew Ontario's economy. Let's have the plan. The discussion is on, and there's no plan from the McGuinty government at this time.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise to read a letter from a very feisty grandmother. She directs it to:

"Dear Liberal MPPs:

"Do you know that last week Madeleine Meilleur, in her capacity as Minister of Community and Social Services, cut off funding for all Ontario grandchildren being raised by their grandparents? Now thousands of families will no longer receive Ontario Works temporary care assistance.

"Although the financial amount is very small (about \$200 a month), there is also limited drug, dental and eyeglass coverage. Without this, most families will not have any extended health coverage for their grandchildren. And what about food, shelter, clothing?"

"The Ontario Liberals' 'poverty reduction strategy' will have to be changed to read 'poverty increase' strategy. None of our e-mails [and] telephone calls have been answered by government MPPs."

It's signed, "Donna Bush, media representative, Cangrands."

1510

VERA SCHIFF

Mr. David Zimmer: I rise today in recognition of my constituent Vera Schiff of Willowdale, who was recognized last week in the 2008 Senior Achievement Awards, this province's highest recognition for seniors.

Vera Schiff is committed to making Ontario the land of opportunity and respect. She has written two books about her experiences during the Holocaust. In sharing

her story, Vera Schiff has demonstrated an extraordinary amount of courage and personal strength. Vera works as a volunteer speaker to teacher candidates across Ontario and indeed across Canada. She has touched thousands of hearts and minds with her message of hope, forgiveness and the ability of one person to make a real difference despite the tragedies of her youth.

I want to congratulate Vera Schiff and thank her for her years of service and contributions across Ontario. Her strength of spirit, grasp of history and courage of conviction is a gift and an example for all of us.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: Tomorrow, Bill 101, the Home Energy Rating Act, will be debated in this Legislature. This legislation is about building better, greener, more efficient new housing and providing more incentives to retrofit our existing homes.

We all know that the hidden cost of home energy use has a major impact on the long-term cost of a home, and realtors tell us that presently there is no mandated, consistent measure to let consumers know what the future energy cost of their homes will be. Bill 101 will change that.

The EnerGuide rating and energy efficiency evaluation report developed by Natural Resources Canada and part of the federal ecoEnergy retrofit program provide the tools for homeowners to invest in reducing the long-term energy costs of owning or renting a home.

The federal and Ontario governments together will provide up to \$10,000 to homeowners who invest in energy efficiency retrofits as suggested by the energy rating of their homes. Paybacks on new home energy efficiency upgrades and on energy retrofits are generally well under 10 years, and savings continue for tens of years into the future.

With the downturn in the economy and the job losses in many communities, the Canadian and Ontario governments should consider a major job creation program in improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock, thereby protecting Ontarians against future energy costs, creating employment, improving air quality and helping our planet.

I invite all members to join me at a luncheon in committee room 2 tomorrow at noon to learn more about this important bill.

CHATHAM-KENT HEALTH ALLIANCE

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to inform the House that the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance has been named one of Canada's top 100 employers in a recent Maclean's magazine. It is one of only three hospitals to make the list.

The hospital is the municipality's third-largest employer, with 1,384 staff members. It competed against 2,000 other Canadian employers in eight key areas: physical workplace; work atmosphere; health, financial

and family benefits; vacation and time off; employee communication; performance management; training and skills development; and community involvement. This honour is a testament to the hospital's strong commitment to provide excellence in service.

Thank you to the staff, volunteers and board of directors for their tireless efforts to deliver health care with skill, compassion, and dedication to the people in this community. I congratulate everyone for their contributions in making the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance a great place to work.

The McGuinty government is committed to strengthening our health care system. Our government is working hard to reduce wait times and improve access to health care in our hospitals. We will continue to work with our health care partners to ensure that the people of Chatham-Kent are able to access high-quality care close to home and when they need it.

Again, congratulations to the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance on achieving this outstanding accomplishment.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMANCIPATION DAY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ÉMANCIPATION

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day /
Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant le Jour de
l'émancipation.

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 member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted Arnott: This bill, if passed by the Legislature, would proclaim August 1 in each year as Emancipation Day in recognition of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire on August 1, 1834.

I believe this is an historic occasion in this Legislature because I believe this is the first bill that is being introduced that is actually co-sponsored by a member from another party, and I want to thank my friend the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for participating in this process with me.

I also want to recognize in the House and introduce Rosemary Sadlier, who is the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Welcome, Rosemary. We'll be working with that organization in support of this bill.

I would urge all MPPs to support this particular piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of bills? Motions? Statements by ministries? Petitions? The member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition to the Parliament of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I apologize. I didn't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The acting House leader: Seek unanimous consent.

The Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd ask for unanimous consent so we may hear a statement by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there unanimous consent to revert to statements by ministries? Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: I rise today to recognize Citizenship Week in Canada. In fact, it is an honour and a privilege, as an immigrant to this great country 39 years ago, to now stand before you to speak about the importance of citizenship.

When I took my Canadian citizenship oath, it was one of the most humbling and joyous days in my life. I knew that as a citizen of the greatest country in the world, I would enjoy the many privileges and rights we are so blessed to have, and I vowed to give something back to my new country.

Just yesterday, millions of us had the opportunity to exercise one of the most important and treasured aspects of our citizenship; that is, our right to vote in a democracy.

It wasn't that long ago when Canadians did not have the many privileges citizenship offers. In fact, the first Canadian to become a Canadian citizen was Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1947. Prior to then, Canadians were merely British subjects living in Canada. Prime Minister King wisely noted, "Without citizenship, much else is meaningless."

Citizenship is the key to opportunity, to rights and to privileges. It is our membership in the community of Canada and Ontario and our neighbourhoods. But it is also about so much more. It's about becoming participating members in our communities. It's about making an individual commitment to keep our province and our country the finest place to live.

Our province is home to people from more than 200 countries who come to Canada to realize their hopes and dreams for a better future. One of these dreams is to become a citizen of this country. In fact, 85% of our immigrants do become Canadian citizens.

As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I have the honour of taking part in many citizenship ceremonies. At these ceremonies and throughout my travels, I hear

the stories of so many who give so much to their new country.

One of the most valuable ways citizens contribute is through volunteering. More than five million Ontarians give their time, their skills and their caring to more than 45,000 non-profit organizations across the province. They volunteer with the arts community, sports teams, food banks, service organizations, and the list goes on.

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Their contributions are their commitment as Canadians. They are participating and they are giving. This participation and these contributions enrich our country, our province and each and every one of us. Volunteering is truly citizenship in action. Citizenship is so much more than a handshake and piece of paper. It's a lasting bond with our country. It is our individual and collective commitment to care for our neighbours, share with our communities and work together to make this country an even greater place to live.

This week, let us pause to reflect on what we have to gain and what we have to offer our fellow citizens of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Citizenship. Citizenship Week in Canada encourages all Canadians to recognize the value of Canadian citizenship. Our citizenship is not just about our status or a card or a piece of paper. It is a statement of the freedoms that all of the people in Canada enjoy—freedoms that Canadians built together over the last 200 years, freedoms passed down to us by our ancestors, freedoms we will pass on to our children and grandchildren.

Every year, thousands of new Canadians join in Canadian citizenship. They are joining a long tradition of freedom, justice and equality. These traditions are what make our citizenship worth something. Newcomers past and present make immense contributions to our province culturally, socially and economically. People coming to our province contribute significantly to all of our communities. They obey our laws, recognize individual freedoms and share the Canadian values of tolerance and understanding.

When an immigrant to Canada becomes a citizen, he or she has to take a test. Here is what they have to study for that test about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. I think every Canadian should study them. All Canadians have certain rights and responsibilities. They are based on Canadian laws, traditions and shared values. Some of these rights and freedoms are: legal rights, such as the right to a fair trial; equality rights, such as the right to protection against discrimination; mobility rights, such as the right to live and work anywhere in Canada; aboriginal peoples' rights; and basic freedoms, such as freedom of thought, speech, religion and peaceful assembly.

Citizenship also brings responsibility. For example, voting in elections is both a right and a responsibility. All Canadian citizens have the responsibility to vote in elections, to help others in the community, to care for and protect our heritage and environment, to obey Canada's laws, to express opinions freely while respecting the rights and freedoms of others, and to eliminate discrimination and injustice.

Being a Canadian citizen is more than voting and obeying laws. Being a citizen also means getting involved in your community and your country.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to respond to the comments from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As I've said before in the House, my parents, who emigrated here from Europe in the wave of immigration in the 1950s, were extraordinarily proud to have become Canadian citizens. My father throughout his life felt that one of the best decisions he'd ever made was to come to this country and become Canadian, and I'm glad, very glad, that they did.

I've been around a number of other countries. I've seen the conditions under which people live. I've seen the restrictions on civil liberties and political rights, and I have to say that we have done many things right here. But I have to say further, and this is important, that in a situation of poverty, of deprivation, of non-recognition of peoples' talents and skills and a lack of opportunity for them to exercise those, those people are deprived of much of what they need to live fully as a citizen in this country. As all the members in this chamber probably have, I've canvassed through many communities, communities where people work two or three jobs, where, when I talk to them about elections, they say that they simply cannot get time off work. They cannot take the time to be away from income-generating activities; they don't have the resources. In practical terms, in order to survive, their rights as citizens, their ability to hold governments to account and put people into office and take people out of office—which is, I think, one of the fundamental powers of a citizen—is compromised. I think, frankly, in this chamber, the fact that we have not put forward and developed a minimum wage that's higher than what people have now means that people are, in practical terms, deprived of much of those rights they have as citizens.

It's very disturbing to me. I'm very concerned when I read reports and, frankly, when I go and talk to my friends in South Asian communities and find more and more that that term "colour of poverty" is one that is real, that there is an increasing correlation between one's complexion and one's colour and one's income. In Toronto, if you look at a map of the city that has been done by demographers, you will see a stratification by income and increasingly a stratification by racial or ethnic background. That disturbs me. No one, based on their national origin, on their cultural origin, should be deprived of

opportunity, should be put in a situation where they would be profiled or discriminated against. So, for me, to fully ensure that people can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens, we have to address those issues of poverty and the racialization, the colouring of poverty.

I want to speak briefly to this whole question of volunteering. Every year when the minister makes this speech I make a similar comment back, and that's that although I think volunteering is an extraordinarily good thing to do—I think it's valuable; I think it's needed in society—the simple reality is that in the last 20 years, more and more crucial services that are needed to keep this society functioning have been devolved to volunteers, to charitable groups, to churches.

I talk to many volunteers who work in Out of the Cold programs in churches overnight. If they weren't there, people would literally be sleeping on the street. That doesn't make sense to me. I value what those people do. I think they do it out of the goodness of their heart. I think it makes a difference in this society, but it is wrong that the difference between life and death, between freezing to death and being able to sleep safely and securely for a night, is simply goodwill. In this society, one of the richest on earth, no one should have to sleep in the streets. No one should have to depend on a volunteer to make sure that they can be secure for that one night.

Food banks, when they were introduced, were considered to be a temporary measure, something we'd do for a short while and then we'd get rid of them. They're institutionalized. If you didn't have them, many more people would go hungry.

Volunteering is good, but the downloading of social services onto the backs of volunteers is a backwards step for this society. I ask this government and this minister to look at the social realities that we're encountering and take the steps necessary to ensure that volunteering is something that enriches society and is not something that society has come to depend on as a branch of social services.

PETITIONS

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. Frank Klees: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Tyler Mulcahy and his friends lost their lives in a tragic accident that could have been avoided; and

“Whereas young people must learn zero tolerance for drinking and driving to protect themselves from enduring tragedy that will severely impact them, their families and their friends; and

“Whereas, towards this end, young people need to acquire safe and responsible driving habits from as early an age as possible; and

“Whereas improved provincial driving laws can effectively contribute to the process of enhanced driver training and responsible habits among youth in this respect;

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“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to enact laws to revoke the licence of drivers 21 years of age and younger with alcohol in their bloodstream, and to also revoke their licence for speeding, for a period of from three months to one year, based upon the determined amount of alcohol or the level of speed involved.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce this petition, given to me by the Grandparents Requesting Access and Dignity Society. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33 put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this and present it to page Sarah to give to the table.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex-change operations were not a

medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex-change operations was not a priority of his government; and

“Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes, signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

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

“That the government of Ontario does not fund sex-change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians.”

I affix my name in support.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

“Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario”—communities like mine—“and;

“Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province.”

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and present it to Connor, one of the new pages.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: It’s my pleasure to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been signed by patients of a number of family physicians in western Mississauga. 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.”

It’s an excellent petition. I’m pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Lauren to carry it for me.

CAMBRIDGE COURTHOUSE

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition, signed by hundreds of good citizens of Cambridge, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, headed “Keep Cambridge Courthouse Open.

“Whereas the McGuinty government plans to close the Cambridge courthouse; and

“Whereas the closing of the Cambridge courthouse could hurt the Galt core, which goes against government objectives to encourage development in the core area; and

“Whereas Cambridge law firms may end up moving to Kitchener as a result; and

“Whereas Cambridge is the second-largest municipality in the regional municipality of Waterloo (and similar in size to many other Ontario cities such as Barrie, Brantford, Guelph, Kingston, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Sarnia, Sudbury etc.), which continues to grow at a rapid rate; and

“Whereas a larger facility with all regional courthouses under one roof could result in higher operating costs;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government ensure the Cambridge courthouse remain open whether or not a new courthouse is constructed in Kitchener.”

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: It’s a pleasure to read this petition from some good people here in Niagara Falls. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by" the member from Niagara Falls; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I am pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Timothy to carry it for me.

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DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

"Whereas Tyler Mulcahy and his friends lost their lives in a tragic motor vehicle accident that could have been avoided; and

"Whereas young people must learn zero tolerance for drinking and driving to protect themselves from enduring tragedy that will severely impact them, their families and their friends; and

"Whereas, towards this end, young people need to acquire safe and responsible driving habits from as early an age as possible; and

"Whereas improved provincial driving laws can effectively contribute to the process of enhanced driver training and responsible habits among youth in this respect;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to enact laws to revoke the licence of drivers 21 years of age and younger with alcohol in their bloodstream, and to also revoke their licence for speeding, for a period of from three months to one year, based

on the determined amount of alcohol or the level of speed involved."

I'm pleased to sign this in support, that this should never happen to one of our children, and present it to Connor on his last day here at the Legislature.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to stand again and present the following petition to the House.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by the member from Newmarket-Aurora entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition in support of it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex-change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex-change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling wait times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes, signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

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

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex-change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition signed by a number of people from Forestwood Drive in Mississauga–Streetsville as well as Parkerhill Road in Cooksville. It is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "End GTA Pooling" and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

"Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

"Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that, as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

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

"That all parties within the government of Ontario support the ... provisions ending GTA pooling"

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Matthew to carry it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 9, 2008, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. McGuinty to acknowledge the economic challenges facing the province and continuing to implement an economic plan.

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very pleased to be here to speak to the resolution that the Premier tabled in the House the other day.

I read with interest some of the comments. Having been on a trip representing Ontario while the debate started, I was very interested to see what some of our colleagues in this House had to say. So I wanted the opportunity to share with the House and the people of Ontario some of the initiatives that our government is taking—

especially important in the face of the economic challenges that we face here in Ontario.

The very makeup of our economy, the fact that we are 40% of the GDP of the nation, the fact that 20% of our GDP, in fact, is manufacturing, so when our manufacturing sector feels some kind of constraint, whether that be the oil prices, the challenge of the US sales market—all of those things mean that Ontario will feel that harder than any province in the country, which is especially why we now beseech the new government—the same old, perhaps some might say, government in Ottawa—to pay special attention to Ontario, to say, "Ontario, in fact, drives the national economy." They too, in the scope of the last few weeks, have had to realize what an impact Ontario has on the nation, what an impact the US economy has on the world, with every part of the world having to respond to what was going on in the US economy these last couple of weeks. No matter where I was, representing Ontario, I could see and hear and feel the impact of the US economy around the world. So imagine a jurisdiction like Ontario, 87% of whose market is exported to that very US market that is undergoing fundamental change right now—and we are holding our own.

I want to talk about our plan and why international trade is so vital to Ontario, that our history is, in fact, being an export jurisdiction. I worry when I hear some of the commentary around Buy Ontario, Buy Canada. All I can say is, no matter where we are in the world, imagine if the rest of the world was to take a position of buying only their own product. Where would that leave Ontario, whose very fundamental is built around the fact that we are an export jurisdiction?

It was very clear that in the Premier's response to our economic challenges and in the very development of a ministry to heighten awareness around international trade and investment—he created a ministry especially to do just that. I'm proud as the minister to go out and speak about Ontario and talk about Ontario's strengths.

I just want to give you some examples of what we've been doing as a government over the course of these last five years. We've created 10 new international marketing centres and put those 10 in vital areas around the world.

If we start with Europe, where the euro is quite strong by comparison to North American currency now, they, worried about their own economies, start looking outside and say, "How can we get into the North American economy?" We say, "We believe that Ontario can be your portal." We believe that Ontario, given our kind of economy and our kind of people, actually makes Europeans feel the most comfortable in doing business. They can come in via Ontario and access an economy of \$440 billion in North America. That's our message to Europe, the result of which is opening an office of this ministry in London, England; in Paris, France, which we just did this past summer to a tremendous response, where the French were saying, "Wow, nous avons des francophones en Ontario aussi. Il n'y a pas de francophones seulement au Québec."

I practised really hard for that speech at the chamber of commerce in Paris to make the point that there's lots of room for French companies to come into Ontario, and they agreed, and we're so pleased to be getting such a positive response from them. We have an office in Munich, Germany, at the heart of some of the most exciting changes in alternative energies and company growth, where we want to latch onto that and link that to our green economy. So, three significant offices in Europe.

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If we move to south Asia, where we know there is growth and we're feeling some of that intense competition in manufacturing, we have an office in New Delhi linking us—not just companies, but educational institutions as well—to find opportunities in India, because we know it's there. We know it's growing and we want to be a part of that.

We've got two offices now in China. We can't fear China; we can't ignore China. We have to jump in there and find the opportunities that exist in China. To that end, I've just opened the second office there. The first one is in Shanghai, a vibrant, booming office doing a tremendous amount of work on our behalf, these days preparing for the Premier's journey to China, where he's bringing environmental technology companies with him. This will be his second trade mission there in his term as Premier. The second one is in Beijing, where in some cultures like the Chinese culture, government-to-government representation actually matters. Some of the companies that we deal with in China, in fact, are state companies, so the relationship between ministers and between governments really matters. So an office in Beijing, their country's capital, is vital to continuing those relationships and making them understand that we want to do business with China. They want to learn from our technologies which, frankly, are the best in the world.

If we swing through the Americas, what's important to us? Our financial services sector, for example, linked—third largest in North America—ICT. What do we have to link to? Where the big bold sectors are in North America. We have a New York office to link us with financial services there. In Los Angeles, again, close to that whole swooping west coast, a huge ICT sector, where we have to link into that market—and two more offices there.

Where are we doing an abundant business in our car manufacturing base, the very heartland of Ontario's manufacturing sector? In Japan. We have an office in Tokyo, where we've begun that relationship, many years now, but that has landed us that second Toyota plant in Woodstock. How proud we are that that's coming with the hundreds and hundreds of jobs that that will bring, because we could maintain a relationship, again, with a culture where the ministerial leadership and governmental relationships really matter.

I think it's fair to say that that's not the case in every government, in every part of the world and in every culture, but it is in some. So government recognizes

when they've got to take leadership and bring our Ontario companies with us.

The Middle East may be just one such region where it's important that the Ontario government open the door and get our companies in there for opportunities that frankly, let me say colloquially, would blow your mind in terms of what they're looking to do in their own markets and what they want to do with money to invest and diversify in our markets.

Why I chose to make notes is beyond me, because we can talk for a long time about the opportunities.

There are two areas of interest for the Ministry of International Trade and Investment. One is looking for those international companies to come in and invest in Ontario, and the second is bringing our Ontario companies that are export-oriented, or not, and make them export-oriented and get them out to all kinds of new markets around the world, because that means jobs in Ontario. That's our focus. It's that simple. Two things: companies out there coming to Ontario; Ontario companies getting out to the world. That's the job of the Ministry of International Trade. It could never be more important than now, when we recognize that there may not be as many opportunities right now in this fiscal year, say, in North America as there are abroad. We've got to extend our focus and our range. We've got to help our companies get out there and look at places they never would have gone on their own, perhaps.

Hence this trip to the Middle East this past week, where we brought 20 companies to participate in the Cityscape Dubai show, the focus of which is development. Our Ontario companies were so proud to understand that in some of these instances, the only reason that our companies employ people in Ontario is because of the business that they do in the Middle East. It's a phenomenal story. It's a story of people who had the nerve to get out there, really ahead of the curve. There's a glass company in Guelph that employs over 300 people, whose whole job is based on the fact that they are selling beautiful glass for these magnificent buildings in Dubai, in Abu Dhabi, all over the Middle East. So if you walk into these grand foyers of these hotel lobbies and you see this artistic décor of glass, that's our glass made in Guelph, Ontario. Can you imagine? There's a place called Crystal Fountains. It's a company based here in Toronto. Again, in the Middle East, there they were in this show. They are employing people in Ontario, but all of their business is outside.

These magnificent builds that are going on around the world are finding our companies in Ontario and saying, "We want yours because it is world-renowned."

There is an engineering firm—I need to give them a plug, I was so impressed with them; hang on now—RWDI.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Also Guelph.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: This is a Guelph company, says the MPP from Guelph. Yes, it was. I was very impressed with them. The Dubai Cityscape show has models to beat the band, models beyond description of

the most magnificent dreams that people will actually build at some point. But RWDI have a niche product that they sell. They're an engineering-based company. They employ tens upon tens of people here in Ontario, but all of their business is overseas. They are the specialists for wind engineering for skyscrapers. So all of these magnificent skyscrapers—and we've got a few in Canada, but not that many compared to other parts of the world—call RWDI because they are the best in the business. They figure out where the holes have to go in the skyscraper so that these things are going to be very, very stable when they go up a kilometre in the air. Imagine: I had the opportunity in a helicopter to see this kilometre-high building. Now, of course we only got up to halfway and the building went up another half overhead and it wasn't quite done yet. It was a phenomenal story.

A fellow named Jim Metcalfe has been in Abu Dhabi for 40 years, and he employs people in Ontario. His is an engineering firm with an expertise that is well known throughout the Middle East.

People employed in Ontario are known around the world in many, many places, with this level of expertise. If you want proper architecture, design and builds engineering, come to Ontario.

This speaks to a part of the resolution that the Premier tabled. He said, "What do we have to invest in for our future? Education." What is our selling feature about Ontario? In all of the OECD countries, there's not a jurisdiction that has a higher level of educated workforce than Ontario. That's because of our investments and that's because in our Ministry of Education we start with the little ones. I can go around the world and say that there's nowhere in the world with a law that says that when your child is in the primary grades it's against the law to have a class of more than 20 kids. How impressive is that? When these companies come to build a plant in our jurisdiction, they know that in 20 years they will still have the best-educated workforce in the world. That's what they're going to find in Ontario. What an exciting story that is to tell.

When I go and meet companies that are out there and are looking for where they are going to invest—let me tell you a little story about Capcom. Capcom is a digital gaming company based out of Tokyo. The digital gaming sector is a booming sector within the information technology sector—they're saying, over the course of the next four years, a \$50-billion industry. Off we went to their headquarters to sit down and say, "How can we get you to expand your base in Ontario?" She said to me, "You don't need to convince me. You in Ontario are the only place that I can find the kind of people I need to hire. They come out of your education system with art, with music, with computer science"—with that kind of skill set, where they learn math by music in many instances. They've got that right combination for that sector.

What's happened since then? Since we were there to meet with Capcom, they've invested and expanded their footprint in Ontario. We're proud of that kind of story.

Aditya Birla is a great Indian company with a multitude of departments within that company. Aditya Birla has, since we've met repeatedly with them, again expanded their footprint in Ontario. So we have to go and maintain good relationships with Aditya Birla, to find out where they're going and how that can be applicable to Ontario.

Denso, one of the suppliers to Toyota: How is it now that we've got some 13 suppliers who have also landed their footprint around Toyota? Because we are reaching out to them and saying, "Come to Ontario."

We also have the opportunity to incent them to come, whether that's through our advanced manufacturing investment strategy or the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. Why do we know that's important? Because we know that every other jurisdiction is trying to cut our grass on this front, and we have to be first and foremost in their minds. It's more than just the money when you come to Ontario. We have far more than that to offer in a number of sectors.

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When we have concerns, we see huge changes in the steel sector, very relevant to the Hamilton area, for example, or Algoma Steel up in the Soo. So we go and meet with these new owners whose headquarters are far-flung from us, and yet they need to know about us. We need to know that they care about their footprint in Ontario, and how we can entice them to make more investments, and make the investment that they currently have in Ontario secure. That's a significant part of this job, and we have done that.

At the same time, imagine the terrible job to have to go and visit Ferrero, the famous chocolate company in Italy—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Someone has to do it.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Somebody has to do that job. Well, let me tell you that their headquarters footprint is almost as nice as the one in Brantford, Ontario. A Brantford, Ontario, investment by Ferrero in Italy is one of their best footprints around the world. How impressive to have an opportunity to speak to them about what else they can do in Brantford, and that was the chance that I had. Imagine getting out of the car, and you are overwhelmed by this smell of hazelnut and chocolate. It's fabulous. Anyway, it was as wonderful as their Brantford site.

Let me talk for a minute about Ontario companies, how well we're doing around the world and why we need to be so proud of them. We've led a number of companies to the aerospace show in Farnborough, England. It's one of the largest aerospace shows in the world. We have 30% of Canada's aerospace industry right here in Ontario, one big assembler—of course, we all know Bombardier—but we also have the huge benefit of suppliers to aerospace. Did you know that 70% of all the landing gear in the world comes from Ontario—Messier-Dowty, Goodrich—and that Goodrich has a testing facility that is the biggest in the world, right here in Ontario? We're proud of that. That means they sell their

product to everybody. Whether it's Embraer or Airbus, through EADS, all of those great companies rely on Ontario supply companies. That's why we have to continue to be international in scope.

I know we've joked in this House about ball bearings before, but there's an important story behind ball bearings. The people from Stratford will know this. FAG Aerospace makes the best ball bearings in the world. That may mean nothing to those of us in this House, but if you're flying that engine on that plane, you want to know that you have a Stratford-built FAG Aerospace ball bearing in that engine because it is precise within a hair's breadth. That's how precise it is. And we're thrilled to see that because we've been able to incent and they care about Ontario, they've made an additional investment in Ontario to grow their facility in Stratford. They sell that product all over the world, and it's very impressive.

A really neat little story, and I know all of you know the movie Titanic: There's that one scene where Leonardo and Kate—of course, I focus on Leonardo—are at the bow of the ship, with their arms extended. That shot is a famous shot for the movie Titanic. The way they took that shot for this film was that the camera was in a helicopter, swooping around the ship. The only reason they're able to take that film, and it's so precise and it doesn't move, is because of a great innovation of technology by L-3 Communications, right here in Ontario. And that kind of technology is not just for Hollywood; it's for defence, it's for the airline industry, it's for aerospace, and that was created right here in Ontario. Of course, I think that's a great story, because who knew we've got such a hand in that great scene from the Titanic, that that would be a great Ontario company?

Let me just finish by saying that we have a number of things we have to be proud of, that this is the Ontario story that we take abroad. We talk about our great cars. Do you know, I met a guy in Saudi Arabia who is the largest Crown Vic salesperson in world—the Speaker of the House will appreciate this, because the Speaker comes from St. Thomas: 6,000 cars a year, and he can't get enough. So I've got to call our Ford execs and get them to ship him more Crown Vics, because they love our cars. The truth is that we make 2.5 million cars in Ontario, 85% of which are exported—another great example of being an export jurisdiction. We can't just shut our doors. We need to burst them open and get out there on the world scene to tell them the great facts of Ontario.

I'm just proud to be a part of a government that lets us do this, that lets us boast, with rights, about a great education system, about great incentives, about the best apprenticeship tax credit worldwide, bar none—that's what you get in Ontario—a digital media tax credit that gets better and better, enticing those new companies from those new sectors to come and invest in Ontario. All I have to say to the people in the House is, be proud and get out there and tell the Ontario story.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I just want to go over the wording:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province faces economic challenges created by the high dollar, high international oil prices, the US economic slowdown, international economic turmoil, and increased global manufacturing competition from China and India ...;

“That just as Ontario families do when finances get tight at home, the Ontario government should make adjustments as necessary to its finances while protecting our shared priorities, such as health care, education, the environment and public safety;

“That the investments made over the last five years in vital public services and Ontarians' key priorities like skills training, infrastructure, education, and health care will help Ontario weather the economic challenges in the short term and emerge stronger than ever;

“And affirms our strongest possible support for Ontario workers and families and for a healthy, growing economy by continuing to implement the five-point economic plan that includes: investing in the skills of our people, making targeted tax cuts, investing in research and innovation, investing in infrastructure, and partnering with businesses, while also expanding trade ties within Canada and internationally and seeking fairness from the federal government for Ontarians.”

Part of the reason I read that was because I want to debate some of the content in there and talk about some of the specific issues. I think the reason it was brought forward, as it was in the House, is that in the past number of weeks we've had a federal election and the current provincial government is essentially doing a lot of what Danny Williams did, and that's the ABC aspect of what took place there. I think what Newfoundland is going to experience is that they'll probably get the ABC, and when any announcements are made, there will be “anything but Conservatives” making announcements in Newfoundland.

Part of what I find concerning here is that if you want to reach out with an olive branch to the federal government, working together in an honest and fair way rather than slamming them for this and blaming them for infrastructure and problems areas that happen in the province of Ontario—Ontario has always been sort of the big brother aspect within the family in helping out the rest of the country and always was there to contribute its fair share throughout the country.

But each government comes along and we need more money. Quite frankly, we've targeted some of that money. A lot of members here would have been out there door-knocking in the fashion that I was in the past couple of weeks. One of the key things was seniors: How are we going to keep seniors in their homes? At AMO they announced the transfer of funds to municipalities, who weren't expecting it—one-time funding. Is it potentially some tax freeze that could help out, and what could take place in developing the economy and keeping seniors in their homes?

I know, Mr. Speaker, you were probably out during the federal election and getting some input or supporting an individual or areas, as most members do; that's part of finding out from our constituents what the key issues are at that time. Most of the time people don't realize that when we're in this—they always say, "The only time we see you is during an election." The reality is, any politicians who are working, doing their jobs, are in here, are at events and things like that, and it's seven days a week. So we find out these things and there's a huge concern.

I can remember buying apples at Algoma Orchards—I don't know if you've tried the honeycrisp, but they're certainly something to try. A senior came up to me and said, "What are you going to do to help us stay in our house? What exactly is taking place that will allow me to stay in our house right now? We've got an assessment increase of 20%. How is that going to affect an individual on a fixed income?" So this transfer of funds could have been played out to keep people in their municipalities.

I spoke with my local mayor, who wasn't going to invest it in infrastructure because what happens is that all of a sudden there's a huge influx with a limited number and it's supply and demand. So all of a sudden there is a huge demand. Well, the cost of supply goes up, so building infrastructure with roads increases the price of that, and there's not a big turnover, as I say, or investment—the best value for the dollar.

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I think something that we, as individuals, need to realize is that government's job, in my opinion, is to create an environment where businesses can flourish and individuals can raise a family and grow, and still finding those balancing points with our environment, where we can have a healthy environment to live and grow.

Quite frankly, I can recall in previous days when the question—obviously, the big issue at General Motors is what's happening with General Motors and the automotive sector, and it's not quite the rosy picture painted by the previous speaker—used to be, "Do I have to work another Sunday?" They were working seven days a week, and the area of concern was, "Why would I want to work overtime?" The comments that used to come back were, "Why would I work another day when the tax that I pay is going to increase? It's not worth my while." So what we did when we had the opportunity to govern the province is, we decreased that tax in order to give an incentive for people to work. Hence, the company was going seven days a week, people were working seven days a week, and there was more incentive for those individuals to keep their funds to spend back into the economy. What this government has done is they've taken the taxes in and given them back to the municipalities in the hope that they're going to stimulate some actual growth or expenditures within the municipality to help the economy.

The other aspect of that is, when you're working on the line at General Motors or when you're at the management level, if you have one individual who's willing to put in the extra hours, you're not hiring another in-

dividual, so that you have the pension issue that comes forward, as well as the benefits and everything else that goes on with hiring an individual. So it's an incentive for businesses and individuals to work in our community by reducing the taxes and allowing them to go forward. Even the motion here talked about decreasing taxes and how they are going to target that. One of the ways might be to give incentives for businesses located here. So if there's an incentive to work more, you don't have to hire as many employees, with less required expenditures in the health and benefits and the pension aspect.

The previous speaker spoke about all the great work in China and India and how they're opening new shops there, yet in the statement here it talks about the competition coming forward from the Chinese community and China and India and the impact it's having here. Part of it is that we, as Ontarians, really want it all in a lot of cases.

As I mentioned last week, I was talking about going out and buying a new set of hockey pants for my son. He wanted a particular brand: Fury. I said, "No, you're not getting Fury." He said, "Why not, Dad? They're good pants." And I said, "They may be good pants, but I have some problems with the fact that they're made in China. We're actually going to buy Tackla pants, which are made in Canada, made in Pickering, and support Canadian workers in that area." If we look at those things and how we can best support our workers around here, it'll have a big impact.

Some of the other stuff I want to talk about on this is the high international oil prices. I have a little bit of a different slant on what took place. Back in 1978, I happened to be with individuals who were in the company of people who were building the first all-steel construction building in the Middle East, and they happened to be given the opportunity to meet with the chair of OPEC. At that time, they said, "The chair would like to meet with you and discuss this issue," because this was brand new technology to them. "You'll be allowed to ask one question, whatever you want, and they will answer the question, but don't ask any more than that because that's it." So he asked, in 1978, "Why did you increase the price of oil from \$5 or \$7 in 1974 to \$50 a barrel?" It was tenfold. The chair of OPEC looked at him and said, "Look, I make \$95 million a day"—1978 dollars. "Do you think I can spend \$95 million a day? Do you think I care if I make \$500 million a day?" The reality was that the US economy came to them and said, "If you want western technology in the Middle East, you'd better have oil at a price that workers in the United States can compete with." So they increased the price of oil so that the workers in the United States could compete with theirs, or so I was told at that time.

Let's get to what's taking place right now with the price of oil. About a year ago, as the price started to increase, I said that Bush was doing the same thing with oil that Carter did with peanuts. If you talk to Mr. Barrett, he'll certainly tell you—and I know you've got a lot of tobacco farmers down there—that the growing conditions

for peanuts are very similar to those for tobacco. When there was a suggestion to convert over to peanuts, it was hard to get into that market because President Carter, when he was in, protected the peanut market and disallowed other markets from coming in, the point being that Bush, in my opinion, was doing that for the oil sector. I said, "You watch"—this was a year ago that I said this, as the price started to increase—"what will happen when they allow offshore drilling. There will be enough pressure on there so that the oil sector, which is disallowed from offshore drilling in the United States any longer"—within two weeks of an announcement of offshore drilling being allowed, going through the Senate, and it having the support to make it happen, the price of oil started to come down.

Now, it's a double-edged sword when you talk about that in economies and the impact on economies. We certainly saw it all around.

I happened to speak to a former vice-president of British Petroleum who was in Ontario, and I asked him about this situation in 1978. He said, "Absolutely." He said, "If that price of oil had not increased, England would never have found the deep-sea crude deposits." That's how they were able to get the financing to find those deposits. So we're seeing some of the games that are being played, in my opinion, and the impact on economies and everything else. You watch, Mr. Speaker: I fully expect that the price of oil will come down now that offshore drilling is being allowed and part of the issues in the US election are being taken care of as part of the economic stimulus. I think we'll see some more individuals.

Some of the other areas, coming from Oshawa, and the impact: We're losing the truck plant, and they're an award-winning plant. I know that in Peterborough, for example, General Motors is still one of the largest employers, if not the largest.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's number two now? It's the second-largest employer in Peterborough, and the impact of what happens with the truck plant takes place.

Now, there is the direct impact on the jobs and what happens with the individuals in the spinoff support sectors that surround it. But what happens with the municipality's tax base with that plant that was contributing over \$1 million annually to the taxes in the city of Oshawa? Where is the expectation going to go? It's going to fall, lo and behold, on the residential component once again in order to maintain that standard that's currently in the city of Oshawa. So individuals can expect taxes to go up.

Let's continue on with that, Mr. Speaker. We had a very wet summer. There weren't too many people watering their lawns out there, so I expect the region is going to come forward and say, "Hey, we didn't get enough people using enough water this summer, so we're going to have to increase the rates in order to cover the cost of operating the water plants and facilities out there." You're going to see some increased rates, an increased cost of living for water. You're going to see increased

taxation in order to cover the costs for the lost businesses in our community. Lo and behold, we're back to seniors again, and what are we doing to help them?

If we look at some of the other ways that we can try to come forward and assist that community, I know that in the spring, when they announced the closure of the truck plant, in May and June—and I had brought forward a number of pieces of legislation because I could kind of see some things on the wall. There were some concerning areas in Oshawa that made me want to deal with this issue. It goes right back to 1996, when I first started talking about the Stevenson Road interchange in our community, which was supposed to help the truck plant, the new car plant and the new paint shop that they were going to start building. There was a \$1.5-billion paint shop that I received information on when I started working on the interchange aspect. "Well, why are you locating the paint shop here? Isn't it going to be hard to get the trucks up here to paint them?" At that time I was told, "Oh, no, no. The paint shop isn't going to handle any trucks." I'd already been told that it was only going to handle 60% of what was coming out of the car plant, so it started to make me wonder and the flags started to go up about where the problems might be and what we can do and try to help out with.

But it's the spinoff effect, the community that's affected by this, and at that time, in the spring, I made an offer to the Premier to look at using the structure of the alternative fuels committee, an all-party committee where there was equal representation—I think at that time they had five government members, three opposition and two third-party, and the Chair was a government member as well—to look at economic stimulus in the manufacturing sector, what we could do, and to try to bring this forward. I still think that would be a way to go, to try to bring everybody together, because we're all concerned about this. There isn't one side of the House more concerned than the other. It's just a way that we can try to address this issue and find out what we can from the business sector as to what they think can help, and we can all sit down and discuss it. I know the alternative fuels committee is still having a significant impact on what's taking place.

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But some of the other things that can help out: I've also brought forward some discussions on—we talk about being environmentally friendly, as mentioned in this motion, the environmental aspect. Every vehicle that comes out of the car plants in the Big Three is E85 friendly, which means it can run on 85% ethanol. Yet, as everyone knows here, there are only four locations in Ontario where you can refuel those vehicles. Is that an incentive or a disincentive?

Once the current government started—and I don't usually like to banter back and forth and blame somebody—taxing ethanol, it was a further disincentive for ethanol to be used as a fuel source. There's a big controversy in Oshawa about an ethanol plant going in down at the harbour. As I said before, there's so much con-

troverson over ethanol. I think the plan should move ahead, but I'm not necessarily sure that the harbour is the place to go.

Ethanol would allow for the vehicles and the distribution—for competition to the oil sector. So if we're concerned enough to put the fact that—it states right in here—the cost of a barrel of oil is impacting the economy, wouldn't it be a good government incentive to find alternative ways to bring in competition so that there are incentives for the oil companies, if need be, to reduce the cost of oil so that the other infrastructures and the other development of that can move forward?

The other aspect of that is, in order to move to the second phase of the ethanol development, they have something called cellulite-based ethanol, which means, effectively, they can take any carbon-based material and convert it to ethanol. But they need the base infrastructure in order to move to the second level of the technology, to get it right so it can be cost-effective. We need those infrastructure things in place so that we can provide the fuel and provide incentive for new competitive areas.

As I mentioned in the House to the minister standing now, in the US jurisdictions there were a number of locations where they used independents or non-primary fuel providers, because we certainly know that the major oil companies have no interest in providing a competitor or a competitive product for them in their own stations. However, if they had some of the independents starting to sell it, they would think twice about it. There are some companies down in the States that found tax incentives to convert non-utilized or primary tanks over to an ethanol-based tank so it could be used for distribution. That had a number of effects.

We hear about the impact on the cost of corn around the world, yet when I speak to the automotive manufacturers, they tell me that 85% of the corn currently produced is not for human consumption already and that the other—it's only 15%. The impact would be minimal, according to them, based on the human consumption aspect, whereas it's an incentive for production for farmers and it's an incentive for new technologies. There's the switchgrass technology that the alternative fuels committee came forward with that was being used for pelletization and for a number of aspects and development. The Ministry of Natural Resources is talking about using biomass in cogen plants and aspects like that. Effectively what that is, you take all the leaves and the branches and the bark that's not used from the tree and take it out of the forest and use it to fuel cogen plants. It sounds great, but eventually they're going to figure out that once they remove all the biomass there's nothing there to break down as fertilizer for the future forests to grow in the province of Ontario. For those who don't realize it, there is a no-fertilization policy in any of the crown lands.

Those are some of the areas that need to be addressed and how we can develop them. I've been focusing on the auto sector because that's where I'm from—Oshawa—which is very key. Fortunately, we've had some diver-

sities in our community and our job structure, whether it's the cancer centre, the university, the courthouse or many other things. But still the auto sector and what takes place there—it used to be the number one economic engine in the province of Ontario, and I think it still can be if we develop the infrastructure and a supportive government position through tax incentives, through incentives for individuals to work and, as mentioned right in there, targeted tax incentives. And we need to make sure we can keep our seniors in their homes, because quite frankly Ontario is a great place to grow, to live and raise a family, as all of us have chosen here. I just think that with a little bit of work and a little bit of time we can make it that much better. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just asked for some water. I wasn't giving the peace sign, but asking for some water.

I have to say that it was a eureka moment when the government finally put a motion forward acknowledging that there was a problem with Ontario's economy. It was a eureka moment because they were late coming to the party. We have watched thousands and thousands and hundreds of thousands of jobs leave this province, and those families that were hit by those job losses over the last couple of years—the last several years—have known very well that Ontario has had an economic crisis looming. In fact, they have been living and breathing—in a very reduced standard of living, I must say—the economic crisis that this government has more or less ignored for the last couple of years.

The resolution that we are debating, that was, I believe, tabled just last week, finally was an acknowledgment by the McGuinty Liberals that in fact there is a threat of recession in Ontario. In fact, last December, after a couple of hundred thousand jobs had already left the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you. What's your name?

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Sarah. Sorry; your collar, your frill, is covering your name. That was page Sarah, who just brought me a couple of glasses of water to get me through this next 20 minutes.

As I was saying, last December, when the finance minister was delivering the economic statement, he said in his speech—and this is only last December; it's not even a year ago—“The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong.” Well, holy smokes, no worker in Hamilton who had been laid off prior to last December would agree that those fundamentals of the economy were vital and strong.

Last spring, when the asset-backed commercial paper mess was starting to unravel and bank economists were lowering their expectations, our finance minister says—this is on March 18, 2008—“The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient.” Well, unfortunately, the

McGuinty government for too long chose to ignore the looming problems on the horizon and instead used words like “resilient” and “fundamentally strong” to get around bringing the real debate to this Legislature about the mess we were in and what we needed to do to reverse the course. And unfortunately, because they took such a long time to get around to acknowledging and realizing the suffering of families in one community after another across this province, because they waited so long, we now have said goodbye to hundreds of thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario while they stood by without making any comment or any remark.

Now we stand debating a resolution that really does nothing at all except acknowledge finally that there’s a crisis happening in the province of Ontario. They could have brought all kinds of things forward for us to discuss and debate, but no; instead of reversing the trend as it was rolling along over the last several years, we are now, after waving goodbye to those good-paying manufacturing jobs, those good forestry and resource jobs, at a position of debating a resolution that really does very little indeed.

We have watched manufacturing and resource sector workers in the province as they’ve lost their jobs, as they’ve lived the recession that’s been upon us for several years. They know that the economies in their communities have not been, for a very long time—one of those communities is my community, and we have known that the economy has not been fundamentally strong. We have watched good jobs leave and we have watched bad jobs replace them, and we have watched poverty rates go through the roof in the city of Hamilton. And I know, having spoken to people all across this province over the last several months, that the same trends have been hitting community after community after community for the last couple of years.

I have to wonder: If I know it and I’m the MPP for my community, where were all of those other MPPs when the same kinds of tragedies were hitting their communities in terms of job losses and in terms of lack of decent jobs to replace those job losses? I don’t know, but at least here we are four years later, hundreds of thousands of lost jobs later, and finally we have a resolution in front of us, although it’s really a do-nothing resolution.

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But nonetheless, the job crisis in Ontario’s manufacturing and forestry heartlands has been significant. Since July 2004, almost 230,000 Ontario jobs in the manufacturing sector are gone—gone, 230,000 jobs. Those are jobs that sustained a decent quality of life for families. Those are jobs where benefits were paid, where pensions were guaranteed for people; jobs where you could actually maintain a household, pay a mortgage, maybe put a little bit aside for the education of your children because, of course, the cost of education in this province is something that very, very few families can afford. You have to put a little bit away, but you can’t put a little bit away anymore, not if you’re one of those 230,000 families whose manufacturing job walked out of this province over the last four years.

Where were those jobs? As I mentioned, they’re in communities all over the province:

- 430 jobs, 80% of its workforce, at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg;

- in Niagara region last month, 800 jobs lost at John Deere in Welland, and a temporary layoff as well in that community of 480 workers at AbitibiBowater;

- since June of 2004, 100,000 jobs lost in manufacturing in Toronto;

- 25,000 jobs lost in Hamilton; and

- almost half of Thunder Bay’s manufacturing jobs lost over the last couple of years.

Yet today, finally—okay, last week—finally, the McGuinty government wakes up and realizes, “Holy smokes, there’s something going wrong here. Let’s put a resolution so that we can bring this debate to the Legislature”—pitifully slow off the mark, and the resolution itself, pitifully absent of any real solutions, any real ways of dealing with the crisis.

In addition to those 230,000 jobs that were lost in manufacturing, more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forest products industry and approximately 35,000 indirect jobs were also lost.

I shouldn’t have to tell the members opposite how important these jobs are. I think they should know, because these are the kinds of jobs that exist in communities and make communities good places to live, where quality of life is good and where people can not just eke out an existence but can prosper and can have the benefits of a decent wage and a decent standard of living.

Just today, in our clippings that we received that come across our desk every morning, Daimler says that it will close the Sterling Truck factory in St. Thomas. This is a company that cut its workforce in half not so long ago, announced layoffs that are coming in November, and now have said that, come March, the plant is totally closing—1,400 jobs gone. This is after that very same community, just a couple of weeks ago, lost 175 jobs at Alcoa Electrical and Electronic Systems, a company that actually provides parts and supplies to the auto sector. So there you go; St. Thomas: add it to the list, the mounting and rising list of good job losses in province of Ontario.

It’s not just important that these jobs are being lost in isolation, but these are some of the best jobs that exist in the province. They pay an average of \$2.50 an hour more than the average wage in the province. They’re not just important—because in addition to paying those better wages, they also come with the good benefits and the good pensions that I already mentioned. So it’s quite interesting that workers who tune in are suddenly realizing that their government not only hasn’t done anything practical in terms of responding to these job losses over the past four years but only now is bringing the issue to the table of this Legislature for a discussion.

It is frankly shocking that that’s the situation, that it has taken the McGuinty government more than four years to come up with a paltry resolution that we’re going to be debating today instead of implementing real practical solutions; instead of keeping those jobs here,

preventing them from walking out the door; instead of making sure that those jobs are replaced by decent, high-quality jobs where wages are good. What do we have instead? Instead, we have very poorly paying jobs that are replacing those jobs. We have a temporary agency system in the province of Ontario where people are working, sometimes three and four jobs, to make ends meet. People are working at these temp agencies. The temp agency is raking in sometimes two times what the worker is being paid in wages—no benefits, no pensions, no dental; nothing like that. You can work for a temp agency and you can maybe get 10 bucks or 12 bucks an hour, but the temp agency is getting 20 bucks an hour. So they're exploiting your labour, and that's what this government condones in Ontario—a disgraceful system where temporary agencies are allowed to exploit workers in the most vile of ways. The government needs to start cleaning up labour standards in this province, and they need to start making sure that workers who put in a hard day of work get a good day's pay back for that. They need to make sure these companies cannot siphon off the value that these workers bring to our economy. It's a disgusting system and one that needs to be addressed.

What's happened, meanwhile, is that Dalton McGuinty has indicated that the manufacturing and forestry job crisis is kind of isolated. The reality is that—and everybody knows it, and I think it was illustrated in my point just now about the other company in St. Thomas, Alcoa—when those jobs walk out the door, it's not just the main manufacturers that are affected. The ripple effect in the economy in local communities is significant. It's not only the main manufacturer, but it's all of those smaller companies that supply parts, that supply cafeteria trucks—even those coffee trucks—and that supply other pieces that will be used in the manufacturing of some of our most important pieces. Take the example of the auto sector. You have the big manufacturer, whether it be Ford, GM, or whatever it is, and then you have all of those other pieces that go into that car that are affected—everything from handles to headlights to bumpers to seats, trim, dashboards, steering wheels, you name it. All of those other electronic systems, like Alcoa, all of those other companies, then begin to feel the ripple effect as well and they end up laying off their workers and those plants close as well.

The problem we have in Ontario isn't new and it isn't something that suddenly has come upon us. The erosion of our manufacturing sector has been long, it has been painful and it has been largely ignored by the McGuinty government. We actually believe that there are things the government could have been doing and should have been doing. You may know that we've been putting forward a number of solutions. Unfortunately, the government has decided they weren't interested in the solutions that the New Democrats brought to the table. We do believe that they have to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs, and when those jobs can't be saved, we need to make sure that the government is being proactive in protecting the interests of workers, which this government has not done at all in Ontario.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's really sad that the members of the Liberal government across the way think it's funny that workers lose their jobs, and they think it's funny that workers lose their pensions, and they think it's funny that workers lose their benefits. Well, shame on them. They think it's funny that workers can't find another job and funny that a worker is going to lose his or her home, probably have their marriage break up, and have their kids in crisis and counselling. Oh, that's a hilarious thing. So congratulations to all those MPPs who are mocking the very important issues that the opposition parties are bringing to the table. Shame on them.

I have to say, there have been opportunities that this government has ignored. There have been ideas and suggestions that this government has ignored that we have brought forward here as New Democrats. We've talked about things like an industrial hydro rate. We've talked about things like a job commissioner. Those are some of the solutions we've brought forward.

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We've raised a number of opportunities that the government has ignored, and then all of a sudden McGuinty comes to the table and says, "Oh, I've just noticed that there's a lot of job loss and we want to have a conversation about how we can make that better, how we can fix that problem." Well, guess what? You've turned a deaf ear for all these last several months and years while we've been bringing solutions to the table and you've chosen to ignore them. And now it's not your paycheque that's suffering, but it sure as heck is the paycheque of many, many families across this province, and that's a shameful situation.

The do-nothing approach of this government is something that they need to deal with. They need to start implementing some of the solutions that we've brought forward. Not only are those the kinds of things that we've talked about, notwithstanding that the minister earlier talked about her tour, the reality is that we do need to provide opportunities for people in Ontario to manufacture products again that we're consuming. That's one of the realities that we have to come to grips with. We can't just be relying all the time on purchasing from outside. We need to start retooling our own manufacturing sector to start creating jobs with the products that we're currently getting elsewhere.

I don't think that's a flawed policy. The minister of international development and trade might think that that's flawed, but I think that workers here in Ontario have the skills, the capacity, the training, the knowledge to be able to manufacture many, many things here in Ontario that they no longer manufacture anymore. Why would we waste those skills? Why would we waste all of the training and all of the capacity that we have here in Ontario by just throwing up our hands and saying that it's okay to have those plants close, have those workers not have the ability to earn a living in Ontario anymore? So I think a Buy Ontario policy is a smart policy and one that this government needs to really get serious about.

The other thing is, we have to make it more difficult, frankly, to just allow companies to walk out of this province. We need to toughen up plant closure legislation so that it ensures that everything possible is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing. In addition, we have to enhance the kinds of severance responsibilities that these companies have for their workers, because workers are always at the back of the line, and that's unacceptable. We need to put workers at the front of the line where they belong, particularly after working sometimes decades in these plants and then being left with nothing at all. We need to expand the severance eligibility and increase the advance notice in situations of mass layoffs. These are some of the things that this government needs to do to try to protect workers from the closures that are happening all around us.

Pension and wage protection, protection of people's vacation pay, protection of people's holiday pay: When these plants close down and walk out of the province, those companies—they could be multi-billion-dollar companies that are completely profitable worldwide, internationally, but they think it's okay to walk away and leave Ontario workers without a severance package, with unpaid wages or severance or vacation pay that's owing. It's absolutely unacceptable.

So those are some of the ideas that we've been bringing forward, and I think there are many, many more, including the—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, I have to say that I find it really shocking that the people across the way, the Liberal MPPs, think it's funny when we're talking about job losses in Ontario. It's actually quite sad, and it's actually reflective of the lack of action of this government. If their MPPs think it's a joke, then of course they're not doing anything to encourage their government to actually act on any of these issues, so then it becomes very obvious why they haven't acted: because they have MPPs who poke fun and make jokes about the real pain and the real suffering that's happening here in Ontario.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Name names.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So then it's no surprise that we have the member from Algoma–Manitoulin who's making fun of the workers in his community who have lost their jobs. I think that's fairly sad and I think it's fairly indicative of the do-nothing government with a bunch of do-nothing MPPs who didn't bother to put the fire to the feet of their own minister and their own Premier.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I just want to set the record straight here on some of the comments that were made by the member from Hamilton Centre. I've got to tell you, I'm really quite taken aback. We have brought forward not only a five-point plan; we have been consistent in our platform since 2003, the investments that we would make with the auto sector and the manufacturing sector and working with our business community. But what I found

offensive today were the comments that she made that were terribly inappropriate about members from across the way. They were wrong and she needs to apologize, and I will expect that to happen. Quite frankly, she knows better than that, Mr. Speaker.

But one of the things I want to say and get on the record too is that that member has voted against every strategy that we have brought forward to help the workers of Ontario, so don't stand in this House and give us a lecture about how we should conduct ourselves. I think that's terribly inappropriate. If there are comments that come, they need to be focused on what the motion speaks to and speak about the investments that we have made. She also needs to go further to explain to the workers in my riding why she didn't support our manufacturing strategy. Why won't she support my workers who are laid off in the riding of Huron–Bruce? We have been affected through Volvo; we have been affected through CanGro.

We have made investments. We have a five-point plan. They recognize that. But one of the points—and I want to get back to Volvo and CanGro, but one of the points that the member from Hamilton Centre voted against, part of our five-point plan, was our investment in infrastructure. That was part of our budget. It also meant a legislative change so that we could come forward with investing in our municipalities as well. That means our roads and bridges.

Both sides—the official opposition, the member from the third party—voted against investments that were going to help ridings like mine. Why would they do that? That's \$28.5 million and \$18.5 million. That's just one of the investments that were made. My constituents want to know why they wouldn't support the investments in my community.

When we talk about building a skilled workforce, we understand that that's also part of the five-point plan. I want to relate a story. As everyone in this House knows, Bruce Power is in my riding. I just wanted to explain one of the challenges as we go through a \$6-billion retooling at Bruce Power that was made possible in conjunction with the McGuinty government. We are retooling part of our reactors right now, so the tubes are pulled out, then it has to be rebuilt within, and then the tubes go back in. The CEO had the opportunity to go and have a look at the work one day. He went inside the tubes and he wanted to meet the welders who were doing the work. Both of those welders were over 71 years old. That's who they had to go and get the help from to get the level of skill that was required in order to do this job.

So when I have the opportunity to go out and talk to my business community, which is on a regular basis, they tell me they need more skilled labour. This is a specific example that we can talk about, and it's also part of our environment, that we must ensure we have the technology that can take us into the future. That's part of building our skilled workforce.

I have the opportunity to speak to a number of our trades, and there's constant pressure on the trades to

produce more and more. So the investments that we have made in our education system will not only assist us from today, going forward, but far into the future, recognizing the higher skills that we will need.

That's just two of the points.

Certainly, cutting business taxes—and in the riding of Huron–Bruce, this represents \$250,000. I'm only going to mention one part of it; there was much more work done. But that represents \$250,000 for my small businesses. In rural areas, we rely a lot on our small business community, as all over the province of Ontario does. We know that a strong small business community is a strong Ontario. When we talk about partnerships with businesses, our automotive investment strategy, our advanced manufacturing strategy—and then it also brings me back to where I started.

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I want to keep my eye on the clock because there are a number of members who want to speak, so I want to give them time.

But I did want to talk about CanGro, where we lost 150 jobs in the south end of my riding, and Volvo, where we lost 500 jobs.

We have had Volvo in our community for decades upon decades. You all know it as Champion road graders. It has always been a very good employer. It's a proud tradition that we have in our community to be able to provide the road equipment that builds the world. So it is with great loss that we see the closure. This is something that they have been working on for a couple of years, and in Europe there were 1,800 job losses as well. There are two years; they're working on a closing strategy right now, and we will work with the company to see where we can assist. We'll also ensure that the second-stage career opportunities are available to them and all the resources will go to help all of those who are displaced. Certainly, the company will be taking a number of the employees within the organization as well, and I'm sure that they will be able to reach, with the union, a successful closing agreement that will be beneficial to both.

The last point is innovation. When we think about innovation, what does that look like? It can have so many different faces throughout the province of Ontario. In every part of Ontario, it really does look different. One of the things that I wanted to talk about for just a minute was, through our rural economic development—and I know that the minister of innovation is sitting there, and I will get to that as well. But I wanted to talk about the opportunities, and I call this a part of the innovation. We've been able to invest over \$2 million through rural economic development, which we fondly refer to as the RED program. One of the things that we were able to do was an equine centre in Clinton. That will help not only the horse industry; it will also help our education system so that we can advance the skills that are needed in today's agricultural community while working in conjunction with our schools. It's also part of a greater innovation, as they hope to move into the breeding part

of it as well. There will be further announcements coming from that, so stay tuned.

The other investments that have been made are over \$1 million in broadband in Huron county, and also, we have made investments in Kincardine and the Pavilion, which speaks to the tourism as well, through RED. We've also made investments in our health care sector. This is all part of a significant investment that will represent over \$30 million over four years.

On to innovation, specifically—I do want to close my remarks with these comments—in a rural area, we look forward to moving toward the technology that will be required in the future. We see a transition happening throughout the province, and certainly there are many challenges that we face today, but we know that by continuing to invest in not only our people but in our business community and also in the research and innovation that looks to the future—we know that this is a solid business plan that has been in place since we formed government in 2003, and it's one that we constantly are going back to and reinforcing as we continue to evolve. I don't want to say that there haven't been challenges, but I think that we must always talk about the investments that have been made and the adjustments that will be made to reflect the future challenges.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to this very important motion.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very pressing issue. It's on the minds of all Ontarians. The economy is first and foremost right now, given the climate in the economy throughout the world, really.

I'd like to just respond for a moment to the member from Huron–Bruce. It really does confound me that the member talks about the opposition voting against initiatives, voting against the plan. The opposition cannot stymie a vote that the government brings forward, so 71 members voting en masse for any initiative wins—is that right? Let me tell you, the reason that this official opposition did not vote for the initiatives and did not vote for the five-point plan is because there's no reality to it. There is no reality to it. Prove to me that anything positive and concrete has come from any of those plans or any of those initiatives. They lack reality. They are the sizzle that has fizzled, and that's all there is to it.

If the government were a business, our CFO would be standing here right now with the following question: "Where did all the money go?" Our CFO would ask, "How have you managed to implement the single largest tax increase in this province and still have nothing to show for it?" Not to be easily cast aside, our CFO would continue with, "How can you ask our stakeholders for more capital when you have not done everything possible in-house to create a positive economic climate?"

We are not a business—I know that—but we do have a duty to act in a businesslike manner. Millions of Ontarians are relying on the McGuinty government to treat

their tax dollars as an investment, not as a private slush fund. The taxpayers of Ontario have worked hard for their contributions and, with rising prices, will be limiting their spending in order to balance their own books.

Our CFO here in the Legislative Assembly is Minister Duncan. Have we witnessed any positive, proactive steps by the minister to stimulate the economy? No, unfortunately, we have not. Have we witnessed any indication that the minister will be curbing spending? No, we have not witnessed that either; in fact, the opposite is true. Minister Duncan continues to approve the growth of public sector jobs while the private sector, a wealth-generator and a creator of quality of life, withers away in Ontario. Have we witnessed any reviews undertaken by the Minister of Finance to ensure that resources are being allocated wisely and cost-effectively? No, absolutely not. Have we seen this government engage the private sector, labour, academia in the creation of solutions and any areas of opportunity to move forward instead of backwards? Again, the answer is, unfortunately, no.

At a time of economic uncertainty, we have seen ministerial budgets balloon well past previous thresholds. Not only is spending growing rapidly, but also, the McGuinty government is consistently spending way beyond what it budgets for from year to year.

In the fiscal year 2007-08, the McGuinty government raked in, let me tell you, \$5.6 billion in excess revenue projections for that year; \$4.1 billion of that came just from taxes alone. Perhaps Premier McGuinty should spend some time with the Ontarians that he is demanding fairness for. Average Ontarians are curbing their spending with the goal of trying to insulate themselves and their nest egg in the face of the uncertain economy. Is that the tack of the McGuinty government? Of course not. Instead of using unprecedented revenue to provide tax relief or to pay down the debt, the government has used this money to fuel year-end spending sprees. Well, my vote, my constituents' vote, is not for sale.

As this government continues to mortgage against future taxes—that's our children's Ontario—total debt continues to climb. It's climbed up to \$168 billion. That's \$13,125 for every man, woman and child in our province. Perhaps Premier McGuinty has chosen to read verbatim from the David Peterson playbook, where spending increased by 45% in a short five years. Taxpayers will clearly remember the state of our economy after David Peterson and Bob Rae tried to spend their way out of a recession. I will remind everyone here today that it was the Progressive Conservative government that brought prosperity back to Ontario. We created a positive economic climate during tough, tough times and made Ontario an attractive province to invest in, and we did this by reducing taxes and reducing red tape. It has taken this Liberal government less than five years to decimate those efforts.

1700

Fairness for Ontarians: That's what the PC Party of Ontario has been about since the establishment of our party. Time and time again we are asked to set the econ-

omy of this province back on the right track after governments have had their way with it. We are comfortable in that role and proud of our record.

My caucus colleagues and I continue to urge the Premier and his finance minister to take action now and stem the tide of business leaving Ontario. We are not opposed to working with Ottawa to keep more of Ontarians' hard-earned dollars here in our communities. What my PC colleagues and I want to see is a concerted effort to first utilize our current tax dollars wisely before asking for more money from taxpayers and from the federal government.

Premier McGuinty's "fairness for Ontarians" motion is a perfect illustration of his lack of understanding of this basic principle, a principle that we as Progressive Conservatives not only embrace but that is factored into our approach to every policy. The fact is that there is only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer has limits.

Instead of looking for ways to get more money out of average Ontarians, the Premier should be taking actions that our caucus has recommended. Those actions are: lowering business taxes to keep businesses here within our borders and continue to attract new business; fixing the worst tax structure in the free world; and repealing the regressive health tax, the profits of which are used as a Liberal slush fund instead of being reinvested into our health care. We have been asking for the repeal of the health tax for a very long time from this side of the House. If you remove over \$2 billion collected by the McGuinty government under the health tax, there is still a surplus of \$3 billion. Let me do the math. Do we really need that \$2 billion? To me and to my constituents, if the McGuinty government was fiscally responsible, they could repeal the health tax without cutting services to health care. Ontarians would be able to keep more of their own money, and perhaps even put it back into our economy, giving it that much-needed spark. These would be proactive initiatives. But he is not a proactive Premier; he is a money-hungry Premier.

A few weeks ago we lost a solid business that contributed about \$4 million a year to a local economy in Guelph. It meant a lot to Guelph. The saddest part is that this business was shut down arbitrarily by one of Mr. McGuinty's own ministries, for no reason whatsoever and with no warning whatsoever. The Premier and his ministers crossed the border of arrogant a long time ago. The Ministry of Labour did not give them a warning and did not issue a compliance letter or a follow-up inspection date. They just closed them down. This company was the only one of its kind in Canada, and now it's leading the way in the United States. The owner could have fought this closure. She could have taken the ministry to court, gone through the proper channels and tried to reopen her company in Ontario. But do you know what? She was tired. She was tired of the high taxes, tired of jumping through hoops, paying more through the nose, when just a few hours down the highway she could really focus her time on her business and her employees. It is a loss for that community and a loss for Ontario because

she contributed to her community, not just by employing people but through minor sports leagues, charitable organizations and municipal taxes. John Tory and our PC caucus want to put an end to these depressing stories. We want to bring back hope to the businesses and bring back hope to the hard-working taxpayer in the province of Ontario. But we know Ontario isn't lost yet. We brought it back from the brink of financial ruin at the hands of another Liberal, Bob Rae, and we can do it again.

In September, just a few short weeks ago, it was the PC caucus who brought the best and the brightest out to the Legislature—the best and the brightest from academics to economists, to labour, to business people—and we brainstormed ways to get Ontario back on track. As Progressive Conservatives, we believe in inclusivity in order to reach our best conclusions. Our party has developed several concrete opportunities for our province to change its present course and rekindle our economic growth. The PC Party will continue to create plans and offer these concrete opportunities and solutions that will get our province back on track.

The Premier has indicated that he is open to ideas from all members of the Legislature. Well, I for one am really pleased to hear that. But if history repeats itself, this may be yet another empty gesture. Tough economic times require leaders and they require actions. Premier McGuinty and Minister Duncan have failed on both these accounts. The “Don't worry, be happy,” responses offered by the Premier and the Minister of Finance over the last four years have come home to roost.

You can imagine how excited our caucus was when the Liberal government indicated that they were putting forward a bill, Ideas for the Future Act. Our hopes were dashed as quickly as they were raised. Premier McGuinty laid waste another opportunity to have a meaningful, positive impact on our economy. By using narrow, short-sighted definitions of both innovation and commercialization in Bill 100, he short-changed Ontario businesses. Only a tiny segment of the economy, representing less than 2% of the jobs in Ontario, will have just an outside chance of seeing any benefits. Huge opportunities were lost with Bill 100, and it was reduced to yet another meaningless photo op.

The PC Party is a stark contrast. It's the party of enterprise. We believe that broad-based tax reductions, reducing red tape, are the key to turning the economy around. We understand business and how it operates and we support measures to reduce the tax burden and increase investment. We don't just help a privileged few friends; we make across-the-board efforts to help businesses stay competitive in a global market—businesses that keep Ontarians, ordinary Ontarians, employed in good jobs. We cut over 1,300 superfluous regulations when we were in government as one of the ways to get Ontario back in business. We didn't just pick a few companies run by our friends or companies that would give us a big media push. No, we cut taxes, we found efficiencies and we repealed regulations in all sectors of the economy. Our reward was a stronger, diverse Ontario economy, not a photo op and a headline.

How did we decide on that path? Well, we listened. We listened to business. Yes, we did listen to business, but we also listened to the average Ontarians. We didn't talk down to business and tell them how to run their show. We didn't pay them lip service and say, “We understand your pain, but here's another layer of taxation and another regulation that you need to budget for.” No, our approach was different and will continue to be different from that of the Liberal government. We listen to what people say and those who employ them; we listen to Ontarians.

Our caucus is listening right now to what employers have to say, and they are crying out for help from this government. They are sending up a clear warning that something needs to change now. Businesses need less regulation and less taxes; they need action, not lip service; they need leadership, not photo ops, and they need it now.

1710

The Premier has asked us for our advice, and we are offering him advice from this side of the House. We are giving him clear methods to get Ontario back on track and Ontarians back to work.

Bill 100 should be amended to include broad-based tax relief that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation across all sectors of the Ontario economy. All businesses, new and old, should be encouraged to innovate and have equal access to this incentive.

Why put a cap on intellectual property? In some cases, an existing business will be better equipped in terms of resources and expertise to bring new IP to market faster and cheaper than a new start-up. This approach would mean that, in Canada, the innovations that were made by Masonite, Four Seasons, Couche-Tard, Gildan, Magna and McCain—these were global leaders—would not be counted as innovation. Not only would many of Ontario's great innovations not have been eligible for this exemption when they were start-ups, but many new start-ups in the capital-intensive priority sectors take up to 10 years to become profitable.

Bill 100 does nothing to help the struggling auto manufacturing sector, does nothing to help agriculture, forestry or mining. The Premier has paid lip service time and time again to the massive job losses in these sectors. He has offered them unemployment insurance and a job that can't sustain a pet, let alone a family.

Our fearless Premier blames the United States, the federal government and the world economy, but a strong leader would create initiatives for us to resolve these issues, not simply to ask for more money.

Chambers of commerce know that the fastest way to achieve positive growth is to expand existing businesses. Perhaps the McGuinty government doesn't listen to the chambers of commerce. Well, we do. It's the fastest way to put your finger on the pulse of the business community.

Minister Duncan, you not only have an economics degree from McGill University but a master's in business administration from the University of Windsor. While

that may have taken place a few years ago, surely there are a few basic economic concepts that you could put into use in your current portfolio.

I would encourage Minister Papatello to return to her Rotary Club roots instead of travelling to far-off lands to find out what the business community really needs.

I would like to think that the business experience and education amassed on the Liberal benches could be put to good use. There is only one reason I can think of that this life experience is not being used, and that is that somebody at the top is shushing you. I'm not at the cabinet table—not yet, anyway—but some of you over there are, and should be bringing your experience to that table for the benefit of our economy. If you aren't going to do so, you are wasting our time, our money and our increasingly smaller window of opportunity to get this province back on track.

It's not surprising that the PCs have a plan. We have pooled our business and our legislative experience. We have met with stakeholders, economists, business leaders and academics, and here's what they said: Lower taxes, reduce our regulatory burden and fix our tax structure. It's simple enough that the Liberal government can do it. The question is, will they?

Ontario has maintained the highest tax burden on costs, at 26.4%, and an incredible 34.8% tax on investment. This is the highest in Canada. We aren't just losing jobs to Mexico; we're losing jobs to Manitoba and points right here in Canada. Unless the Premier has struck a deal with you all, we need to stop the western migration of Ontario's businesses.

Premier, it's time to listen. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The confidence of the Minister of Transportation always impresses me.

Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to comment on the debate before the House. The resolution that was put forward by the government is one that has numerous friendly sentiments in it, but no strategy and no direction for the province as a whole, and I find it quite extraordinary. I was listening to the minister from Windsor West, Sandra Papatello, talking about her travels, her experience with Canadian industry, our sales of products abroad. Frankly, listening to her, I wondered why we were having a debate at all, because clearly we were doing everything right. There was no strategy put forward by her talking about how you function within a globalized world, what it really means for Ontario to not have the advantage we've had in the past of low-cost energy, to be in a situation where trade deals have opened up our economy to competition and to lower pricing. That means it's very, very difficult for people to make a decent living.

When I listened to the minister talking about the new energy economy, talking about what other jurisdictions are doing, it struck me that here in Ontario we are doing

almost none of that. We here in Ontario are not doing what's being done in Quebec, where those who want to build new wind turbines in that province have to spend 60% of that investment in that province. It is generating investment and manufacturing so that the components that go into those wind turbines are actually made in Quebec. I checked with the legislative library here; we do not require that in Ontario. We don't have an approach that says, "Here's a new industry that's developing in the world. Here's an industry that will give tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people an opportunity to make a decent living. Are we in fact getting into it in a substantial way?" The reality is, only as a purchaser of the end products and not as a jurisdiction that actually makes those products.

When we think about Ontario, we have a lot to be proud of. We have very skilled and capable people. When you travel around southwestern Ontario, you see industrial plant investment that's highly sophisticated, you talk to people who are well trained, motivated, who want to do good, quality work and they want to live a decent life, but they don't have a government, a Liberal government, that has a strategy to protect Ontario's economy in a globalized world, in a world where the rules are very different from what they were 20 years ago.

Many people have talked about this report from TD Economics talking about a vision of Ontario's economy. I don't agree with everything that's in this report, but there's a graph that I think people really need to see. I'll describe it to those who are watching this debate and I'll try to describe it to those few remaining hardy souls who are listening to me in this chamber. If you look at this graph, you will see that in Ontario and in Quebec, since about 2003-04, there has been a sharp decline in manufacturing employment. In Europe, there was a decline in the early part of the decade and it has essentially flattened out. In Japan, there was a decline in the early part of the decade and now it is starting to pick up. Those jurisdictions are obviously looking at strategies that are allowing them to protect part of their manufacturing base. The UK has not adopted a similar strategy; they show a very huge decline in their manufacturing base. But we, here in Ontario, drift along.

When we talk about investment for R&D or support for research and development, it's well and good, but what is that, in the end, focused on? What will we do in Ontario, what can we do in Ontario, that gives us a competitive advantage over the rest of the world? At this level of government we don't have control over trade deals. We can speak out, we can protest, we can make noise, but in the end the federal government will have the ability, the jurisdiction, to set those deals, and those deals have not been to our advantage on a regular basis. Fair trade, the auto pact, was a huge advantage to Ontario. It gave us the pillar of the auto industry, and that auto industry spun off a variety of other industries—in rubber, in glass, in steel. That advantage was taken away from us in a ruling by the World Trade Organization. So now we

have to find at this level of government advantages that will bring jobs and hold jobs.

What this government has not looked at, except in a negative way, is energy policy. When you read the TD Economics report talking about the loss of the advantage of low-cost energy, you have to recognize that this was a substantial pillar in Ontario's economic or industrial strategy. We have been subsidizing power costs because we made investments in very expensive technology: nuclear technology. When I asked the Minister of Energy today about the declining demand in this province and the fact that demand for power is falling faster than any projections the Ontario Power Authority put forward two years ago when they developed the plan for the new nuclear power plants in this province, his answer to me was, "Well, our conservation efforts are doing very well." No. The reality is, demand for power has fallen by about 700 megawatts in 2008. That is a very substantial drop in power demand.

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We are continuing to invest in extremely expensive power generation while our demand for that power continues to go down. In the end, the mathematics of that is very simple: The cost of power is driven up, and our desirability, our advantage and our competitiveness are undermined.

Moody's and Standard and Poor's are projecting that the current cost of new nuclear power is 15 cents a kilowatt hour. That is not economically competitive, and yet we are barreling ahead with a plan for substantial investment in nuclear. Who is going to be able to afford to buy that power? What industry is going to come into this province to buy nuclear at that rate? Wind is 11 cents a kilowatt hour; nukes, 15 cents a kilowatt hour; conservation, 2 cents to 4 cents a kilowatt hour. So you look at the numbers and you can see very quickly that we're going down a pathway that's making us less and less competitive, less and less attractive, less and less able to protect jobs and bring new ones into this province.

This Liberal government is essentially on autopilot. We're swept this way and that way by the tides of international economic dynamics. But in the end we don't have, out of this government, a strategy to actually create and protect jobs. We aren't looking at a focus that needs to be there.

I talked about this before, but I'll reference the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century, the Conservative government in this province developed Ontario Hydro, understanding that low-cost power would drive industrialization out of the province, and they were right. They were more right than they thought, because in fact it didn't just result in the attraction of industry to Ontario. It also developed within Ontario the expertise in financing and hydroelectric technology that allowed us to compete around the world. So Canadians who had learned financing here, who had learned hydroelectric technology here, were able to go out into the rest of the world and use that expertise to employ themselves, to create value.

We don't have that kind of thinking with this current government. There's talk about how Ontario industry is hit hard by the volatility of oil prices. That's true. The reality in this world is that the cheap oil, which used to be able to be produced for \$2 or \$3 a barrel—you're now running out of that, and we have oil from sources that are more and more expensive. Some of the more recent tar sands oil sources are \$70, \$90 a barrel; some of the offshore oil that's coming in is \$70 to \$90 a barrel.

The simple reality is that here in Ontario, as long as we tie ourselves to the oil and gas infrastructure, we are tied to volatility and we are tied to costs that make us less and less attractive. If we actually want to be a jurisdiction that's attractive, that draws in investment, we have to move very quickly to get off that dependence and do what was done in this province at the beginning of the previous century and develop our indigenous energy sources, which are renewable. A strategy like that would actually drive technological innovation, would actually drive manufacturing, would actually create and protect jobs. But there is nothing like that being put forward—nothing. In the absence of a strategy that actually will create and protect jobs, that will actually make Ontario attractive to those who want to create employment, we face continuing decline in manufacturing employment and continuing decline in our standard of living.

It's useful to have a debate; it gets ideas out on the table. But unless this government actually decides to develop a strategy and carry through that strategy, it will mean nothing.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased this afternoon to be able to join in the debate regarding the resolution brought forward by the Premier.

I want to begin just by talking a little bit, generally, about my riding. It's probably not unlike, in some ways, each of the ridings of the members in this Legislature. I think it's important that as we're having this debate, we come back at times to the people and the nature of the people we represent. My riding of Pickering-Scarborough East is fairly suburban. Parts of the community are seniors, those who are retired, who have worked hard and in some cases invested well, living in homes for 30 and 40 and 50 years. Parts of the riding are made up of first and second-generation newcomers to this country, who are either just striking out in this country and planning a future for themselves and their children, or maybe they've been here one generation and are now seeing the fruits of their labour being expressed through their children, through the education they're acquiring, and as they seek out opportunities and jobs and building careers and families. My riding is made up of families who are multi-generational Canadian, who come from families who have grown up in this country, have moved to the riding from other locations, who are raising children, who are supporting grandchildren, who are working to support their parents. Those folks work in Toronto in many cases; they work in the 905 belt, in Peel region and

York region and Durham region. They're pretty typical. They're not typical of some ridings, because they are a suburban riding. In many cases, they feel that they're a bit of an island. The folks in Pickering don't necessarily feel very attached to the centre of Durham region and what's happening at times in Oshawa, and folks in the Scarborough East part of my riding sometimes don't feel very connected with what's happening in downtown Toronto, but they share the concerns of their neighbours and their friends and their families. And there's no question that at this point in time, people are concerned. We only need to look at what was happening during our own federal election and look south of the border at what's happening right now to understand and empathize with what's happening with individuals and families with their economic situation, whether they're seeking out jobs or retaining jobs, or the investments they've made for their retirement plans, and see those being taken apart to some extent. People want to see job stability—they want to be able to pay their bills, they want to be able to pay their mortgages—and they want to have some future financial security and security for their family. So, in that way, my riding is much like the ridings throughout this province.

I ran for this office some five years ago, and I did it primarily for one reason, I think, at the end of the day. It's one thing that sticks in my mind. I can remember the municipal governance model, where government is important, that the role you play in government elected office is important in your community. When I heard Mike Harris, the former Premier of this province—and I'll paraphrase in case I don't get it exactly right—saying, "We're not the government; we're here to fix the government," it struck me as odd. It was completely contrary to what I believe should be the role of government. I believe that those of us who are elected have a significant role as government. We're not just here to take the government apart in some fashion.

I believe it's important for governments to be the provider of quality public services: public services such as education, public services such as health care, public services such as community safety. You have seen over the five years that we've had the privilege to serve on this side of the Legislature, those who serve in cabinet and those members who provide support to those cabinet ministers, that we've focused on the importance of public services, and those public services that we have improved, enhanced, restored, will put this province in good stead on a go-forward basis. It will be the quality of education we provide to our young people. It will be the access and capacity of our health care system to ensure that we are healthy through all stages of our lives. It'll be the capacity to ensure that our communities are safe places to be, that will restore to this province, in many ways continue to provide, the life that we want for ourselves and our families. It will provide the level of confidence that will assist us in moving through difficult economic times. It's knowing that government is there to provide and support those basic, quality public services

on which we depend, on which we have built our families and will continue to do so. That's the primary reason that I was engaged in this process and am so pleased with the plans and strategies that we put forward during that period of time.

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During my time here, I've had the chance to serve directly with both the Chair of Management Board, Mr. Phillips, in that original capacity—now a different model—as well as with two finance ministers, the Honourable Greg Sorbara and the Honourable Dwight Duncan, as their parliamentary assistant. I've had the chance, in that role, to see the workings of this government, the workings of the bureaucracy of this government, and have gained a tremendous amount of respect for the expertise, the quality of service and the folks who are doing the job on our behalf. They've provided us with good advice, and we've taken much of that advice and implemented it as part of our overall strategies.

The oppositions speak to a number of matters. I for one know, from what they've said and what will be recorded as part of that in Hansard, that our government will look carefully at the ideas they put forward. But I can tell you that if those ideas are completely contrary to the policies and platform we put forward for election, then there's little likelihood that we would adopt those ideas as part of an economic strategy. If their ideas can be built into the economic strategy—the plan we put in place—if those ideas can enhance those plans, if those ideas can provide value added to those plans, then I'm convinced that our government will look carefully at those—our Minister of Finance, the Premier and others—and find ways to incorporate those ideas. But if they're simply the platform they ran on that the public in this province rejected a year ago, then it's unlikely that we would want to adopt those.

We talk about cutting taxes as one of the strategies, strategically, for our five-point plan. We've been doing that and we continue to do that. We've eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers and the resource sector—we made that retroactive to January 2007—and we're going to completely eliminate that tax by 2012. Just the retroactive portion of it meant that some \$190 million in rebates was going to our manufacturing and resource sector. They need that money. They need that money to be able to invest and to be able to retain and grow their companies.

We heard from the business community; we listened to them. We took a look at the business education taxes, which were seen as one of the regressive business taxes, and we're making significant changes to reduce that business education element from the business community, and it's being accelerated in northern Ontario, where it's most needed. We put in place and debated a bill recently regarding opportunities for the commercialization of new ideas in colleges, universities and institutions in this country that develop new products here in Ontario—exemptions from taxes for a 10-year period. Now, we all know that in the early going, it's

hard for companies to get the point of paying corporate taxes the first few years, but this is a clear incentive to support companies that want to do business here.

We believe that infrastructure is an important part of the structure of this province. We know that job creation and infrastructure is one way to get and keep people working here in the province of Ontario. We know that our hospitals, our roads, our schools and our bridges were allowed to deteriorate during the last decade or more, so we're making very significant investments in infrastructure. I've been driving down the road, over the past few weeks, from my home to the 401, where I have to come in to work, and I've been looking at the local high school. My kids went to that high school. As a matter of fact, my wife actually went to that high school for a period of time. It's Dunbarton High School on Whites Road in Pickering. I'm noticing that after a number years, it's getting some renewal going on. It's getting a bit of a facelift to the front of the building. There's an addition going on, and there are new access points being put in for an emergency, the point being that this is money being invested in the school system that was sorely neglected for a period of time. It's putting people to work, it's investing in products and services, and it's investing here in the province of Ontario.

In the region where I live, although my riding is split between Toronto and Durham region—the member from Oshawa spoke earlier, and during his speech he mentioned the courthouse and he mentioned the cancer centre. These are very significant public sector investments in new infrastructure here in the province of Ontario. The courthouse is probably the largest single public facility or institution that's being built in the province at this point in time: very, very significant.

We're investing over \$1 billion right now, sharing in the surplus that this province had the pleasure to be able to have come to it as a result of the economy we're in. We're putting some to debt, and a significant amount, over \$1 billion, is going to municipalities so those roads and bridges, particularly in rural Ontario, that are so desperately in need of repair and rebuild can get done. We're buying Canadian materials. We'll be buying Ontario materials and we'll be using Ontario labour to get those jobs done.

As part of the plan, you need to partner with business. We've heard the opposition speak to the matter of talking to the business community and talking to the local business organizations. We believe in partnering with business. It's why during our first mandate we established an auto sector strategy investing some \$500 million to leverage some \$8 billion in new development. Now, those are dollars well spent in supporting a manufacturing industry that is strong and remains strong in this province, in spite of the challenge, in spite of what's happening internationally. We have new plants being built in the Woodstocks; we have new engine plants being built by Honda here in southern Ontario. So we've taken the opportunity to partner with business to leverage significant new investments.

We know that it's also important to support innovation in the province, and we have the new Ministry of Research and Innovation that was set up by the Premier under his leadership initially and then turned into a full ministry with others having ownership and responsibility for that.

We have a plan. It's a clear plan. It has five points to it. Each of them can be articulated in a fashion that says, "This is the job that we're getting done today." We want to build on that plan. We welcome the opposition's insight as to how we can enhance that plan within the context of making it better. I look forward to this debate continuing. I look forward to hearing the comments that are being made by the members on all sides of this House, and all of those will be taken into consideration. I look forward to the fall economic statement to be brought forward by the finance minister within a week or so, so we will have a fuller view of the current economic climate as well.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate today on the motion put forward by the Premier last week.

In my remarks today, I'd like to concentrate on something that the government hangs out as the keys to the eventual prosperity of this province, and that's their five-point plan. I had a look at what, in fact, the five-point plan was. I also looked at what were some of the initiatives that have taken place within the province and what some of the other experts in the province and in Canada are telling us.

First of all, I want to quote the Premier from his remarks last week. He says, "I want to acknowledge the reality of our economic challenges and the impact these are having on our families and businesses." Well, I think on this side of the House we were quite surprised at how late he was in coming to recognize that there were real economic challenges. And yes, we have been saying on this side of the chamber for well over a year the kinds of impact that they are having.

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We have stood in our places and referred to communities across the province where job losses have been devastating. I say "devastating" because of the fact that while it appears in the paper as a number of job losses in a particular community, we understand that for every person—every number is in fact a person, and a person whose income has disappeared, whose family is going to be impacted by this and whose community is going to be impacted. So often, just because it's a raw number, you don't stop and realize all of the indirect impacts that every one of those numbers has on individuals, their families and their communities. It was quite a surprise for us to realize that it wasn't until October 8 that this reality came to the Premier.

I also think, for instance, of not only the job losses that have come at increasing speed, I would say, across the province, but the Minister of Finance stood up in his place many months ago and talked about the investment

in commercial paper and the kinds of losses that it represented for the province. So we saw investments, then, that had been made in the name of the province of Ontario that were obviously not good ones, shaky at best, and we're talking numbers, I seem to recall, in the neighbourhood of a \$100-million loss. Again, I was surprised that it was October 8 of this year that the Premier came to recognize economic challenges and impacts.

As a member of the opposition, whenever we've raised the issue about this economic reality, the government has always talked about its five-point plan. I began to look at this a little more carefully to see where in fact the five-point plan fits with the kind of economic reality that the Premier was referring to. It seemed to me there were a number of things that seem to be overlooked in that real look at the economy. I think, for instance, of the fact that this year the TD Bank reported that Ontario is on track to becoming a have-not province. It is set to receive equalization payments in 2010, when per capita GDP is projected to fall to 5% below the national average.

Mr. Speaker, you've got to remember that this is in the context of the historic leadership of the province of Ontario where, quite rightly, and by many—we have always been first or second and we have always accepted the responsibilities and equalization payments that that entails. We have always accepted that historic role. But the idea that, by 2010, Ontario would be eligible to receive \$400 million in federal equalization transfers in fiscal 2010-11 and \$1.3 billion in fiscal 2011-12—I think that comes as a real shock to many in this province.

We look at another feature, then, of the McGuinty economy. For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December 2007. Ontario's unemployment rate remains above the national average and is forecast by all major banks to stay that way through 2009. Ontario has gained a total of 501,800 new jobs since October 2003, but almost half of these new jobs, 237,100, are public sector jobs versus a mere 191,000 private sector jobs. This represents a 22% increase in public sector jobs versus a mere 5% in private sector jobs. Since 2003, part-time employment has increased 15%, whereas full-time employment has only increased 7%. The TD Bank Financial Group says, "We anticipate further bad news in Ontario's employment pipeline over the next 18 months, with the jobless rate moving above 7% and personal income growth essentially stalling."

I mentioned that I wanted to look at the five-point plan, and one of the points in that is expanding trade ties. I want to just give you a few statistics that demonstrate the kind of challenge that this particular part of the five-point plan represents.

The first one, then, is on the international merchandise reports: Over the first six months of 2008, the value of Ontario international merchandise exports is down 12.9% from the same period in 2007. That's one year, folks. The value of imports is 4.9% lower.

On the issue of wholesale trade: Over the first five months of 2008, Ontario's wholesale trade is 2.7% lower than during the same period in 2007.

Manufacturing sales over the first six months of 2008: Ontario's manufacturing sales are 7.5% lower than during the same period in 2007.

The St. Catharines Standard reported on October 2:

"Ontario will have to reinvent its economy if it hopes to weather the recent financial storm.

"With its manufacturing sector on the wane and former advantages, such as a weak dollar, gone, the province will have to make drastic changes to stay economically viable," TD Bank Financial Group chief economist Don Drummond said....

"I'm worried about Ontario's future," Drummond told the audience of 220" at the summit in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "I think you should be worried about it."

"The province should focus on training a top-quality labour force, investing in infrastructure and reducing taxes if it wants to stay competitive in the new economy....

"While the province has so far avoided a recession, Ontario is nearing zero growth," he said."

The issue of zero growth is, again, certainly something reported by others, as in the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal and a Royal Bank study. The issue, then, of expanding trade ties I thought was interesting when we had the minister speak earlier. I was struck by the fact that when she went on the travelogue of what she had done and where Ontario had opened offices for business, there was never any indication, when places like London, Paris, Beijing and Munich particularly were referenced, about the measurement of success of opening these offices. They are there to "provide opportunity," in her words, but as far as expanding trade ties, we didn't have the same kinds of measures of outcome that would make people understand the value of the investment of these various centres that were being opened.

1750

I want to talk for a moment about another area that's in the five-point plan, and that's investing in infrastructure. I have to tell you that as the MPP for York-Simcoe, a place where this government has initiated Places to Grow, I find it very interesting as I go to my constituents, who have huge subdivisions and commercial growth taking place in communities like Bradford and throughout Innisfil, particularly, without matching infrastructure support. So you look at places like Bradford and Innisfil and East Gwillimbury and Georgina that every day suffer the effects of gridlock and every day see more and more people using the road network—there's no Bradford bypass. There's no demonstration of widening the 400. There's nothing that would help that commercial growth. When I look at the kinds of jobs that appear on the side of the road on the 404 in Newmarket, there are literally hundreds of jobs that are in that very small area. That's the kind of infrastructure that brings those jobs. By the way, those people who worry about building highways that create more and more car use forget that highways are the lifeblood of commercial investment. So when I look at all those jobs that are then closer to home, it seems to me that it's a very short-

sighted view, saying, on the one hand, yes, we're going to have a place to grow, but we're not putting the infrastructure money there. So when I look at this as part of the five-point plan, it seems to me that it's very, very selective.

One of the other areas in the five-point plan is investing in skills, and it's very interesting because on October 8 the Premier said, "The investments made over the last five years in vital public services and Ontarians' key priorities like skills training ... will help Ontario weather the economic challenges in the short term and emerge stronger than ever." But this past March, Ontario's colleges held a conference about skill shortages. Some 350 representatives from business, labour, education and government gathered together to address one of Ontario's most pressing challenges: the shortage of skilled workers. While the province struggles to retain people who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, there are also many employers struggling to find sufficient numbers of qualified people.

By the way, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities was at the conference and obviously should have passed on this message to the Premier because of the critical impasse that we have. There's such a short supply of boilermakers that they're looking worldwide to be able to do that. Even in the agency review of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies on September 17, the Ontario Construction Secretariat is quoted as estimating a shortage of 250,000 skilled workers that will be coming up over time with retirements.

So when the Premier talks about his five-point plan and the skills—we are in crisis. In fact, it's very, very difficult even in infrastructure planning to be able to be sure that when you approve a project, you aren't going to then find yourself with a skill shortage in a particular project that will then delay the ability of people to be able to finish that project on time, and since you're looking at

design, build, finance and maintain for 30 years, this becomes an extremely important issue.

Roger Martin told our economic round table that we educate only 50% of the people coming out of high school now with a post-secondary education of any sort. He said:

"Think about it. We're hoping that those 50% who don't get a stick of higher education are going to be able to compete with labour from China and India.

"We know that 70% of all jobs that are going to be created in this province in the next generation are going to require post-secondary education... So we're putting out 50% of people without any post-secondary education to compete for 30% of jobs for people without post-secondary education. What are the other 20% going to do? Nothing. We are making sure that they're not going to be productive. And we're making sure that the 50% competing for the 30% will drive down wages for those kind of jobs and the 50% competing for the 70% of post-secondary education jobs will drive up those wages and drive inequality."

Those are ideas that come out of the Premier's five-point plan. It seems to me that he needs to go back and have a look at the five-point plan. He needs to have a look at what's actually happening in this province and look at how he can use the time that he has as the Premier to be able to make it viable. In what I have briefly described, it's falling short. It is not doing what it is supposed to be doing on any front. Any of those five-point plans need a lot of revision, and they need it very, very soon.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, October 16.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
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Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Ageloni, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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