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Monday 27 October 2008

Lundi 27 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 octobre 2008

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Today is the University of Waterloo Deans' Day at Queen's Park, so it's my privilege to welcome in the east gallery this morning representatives from the university. We have Dr. David Johnston, the president and vice-chancellor of the University of Waterloo. We have two—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A few more on the list.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: That's right, there's a few more to go.

We have two vice-presidents: Amrit Chakma and Meg Beckel. We have a plethora of deans this morning: Ken Coates, Thomas Coleman, Roger Mannell, Adel Sedra, Deep Saini, Terry McMahon. And with us also this morning from the university we have Ross McGregor, Bob Truman, Wanda Richardson and John Stevens.

Please help me in welcoming the University of Waterloo this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Durham, and on behalf of page Kevin Turner, welcome his mother, Denise, and his brother Joshua. They are in the west members' gallery this morning. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Attorney General. Over the last two weeks we've seen an alarming number of shootings and homicides that have Ontarians seriously worried about their personal safety in their homes and when they're out in public.

This past weekend a 23-year-old girl from my hometown of Brockville, Bailey Zaveda, was shot and killed. She was a completely innocent bystander in the wrong place at the wrong time. According to police, the alleged shooter has a very extensive criminal record and is a very violent person. We know he had been previously charged in a 2005 shooting.

Attorney General, can you explain the circumstances under which this man, the alleged killer, was on the street?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Of course, all of our sympathies go out to the families affected by this and the communities affected by these terrible tragedies.

I won't speak to the specifics of the case because, as the honourable member knows, I won't interfere with a police investigation. Interfering with a police investigation would do injustice to the very goal that my friend and I share, which is ensuring community safety.

We've taken a very strong stand that's very tough on crime, as a government. We've provided for more police, and we're working with Police Chief Blair, Ian Davidson, who's head of the chiefs of police, and all local chiefs to find the right approach, the best possible approach, for utilizing those officers on the ground. We've made further investments through our guns and gangs task force, and we will continue to make sure that we take the toughest possible approach for the serious and dangerous people who on our —

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: People, I suspect, are sick and tired of that kind of response, getting up and justifying the failings of the justice system. Innocent people, innocent bystanders, are losing their lives, people are invading their homes, because the justice system made decisions that put these people back onto the streets to endanger lives. That's what you're standing up here on a daily basis defending, and you should be ashamed of yourself.

If you really care about public safety, you're going to stand up, allow the debate to occur tomorrow, which you're trying to block, and let us get an insight into what's going on in the system, why it's failing all of us, and do something about it. Will you stand up and give us a straight answer today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I don't believe that the thousand extra police officers we have put on the street are nothing. I don't believe the 329 new police officers that were announced last Thursday are nothing. I don't believe the \$68 million into the guns and gangs task force is nothing.

But my honourable friend should know that the Criminal Code is federal jurisdiction. It's time he picked up the phone and called his friend Harper. When we called for tougher bail laws, he scoffed. When we called for Harper to put in the Nunn commission recommendations

on young offenders, he scoffed. He questioned about Harper's crime policy which had nothing about bail. It's time he picked up the phone and recognized federal jurisdiction. Call your chum and do something about it.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My God, what an alarming abdication of responsibility. Two weeks ago, with the murders of two women in the sanctity of their home—that's a situation where the alleged killer is someone who Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair says never should have been released from jail after he'd been charged with two violent sex assaults. He said the murders could have been and should have been prevented. You know who failed to appeal that bail decision? Your crown. You know who failed to ask for electronic monitoring? Your crown.

Minister, you are responsible for the crown law office in this government. You are the one responsible for the failings of the justice system, the administration of the system, in the province. When are you going to pull back the curtain, let the people know what's going on, and correct the problems?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: There are many things that I would like to say, but I cannot say things that might jeopardize an ongoing prosecution because jeopardizing that would put at risk the very public safety that we are here to protect. We're doing everything within our power to be as tough as possible on the dangerous and the violent.

It is not ours alone. We need the federal government to step up and do what they can. We're glad they brought in tougher bail laws, when we asked, for those who have serious gun crime charges. We're glad they brought in mandatory minimums for serious gun crimes. We're not happy that they did not change the young offender legislation to deal with out-of-control youth. We're not happy they didn't change the two-for-one credit provisions. We're not happy that my honourable friend is not—

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

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We've had so many violent deaths in the past couple of weeks—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To whom?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Sorry, to the Attorney General: We have families concerned, people worried about walking on the streets. We're talking to people this morning who are worried about going into downtown Toronto, walking the streets, in the evenings because of the deaths that we've seen over the past few months.

I ask the Attorney General, instead of the rhetoric we hear in here on a regular basis blaming the federal government—he has a range of tools; he's responsible for the administration of justice in this province—to stand up today and explain why his crowns failed to appeal the bail release decision and why they failed to request elec-

tronic monitoring in terms of the death of those two women.

1040

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The honourable member must know that I am not in a position to comment on the case, but he insists on trying to elicit comments that, if made by me, might endanger the very community safety we are trying to protect. When decisions are made in the justice system, they are made according to the rules that exist. The rules for bail hearing are found in the Criminal Code and in the charter, and the federal government is in charge of the Criminal Code. My honourable friend should know that.

It is time for an end to the rhetoric, I tell my friend. It is time we recognize that there is a partnership. It is time that we recognize that although this government can fund more police officers, as we have—another 329 last Thursday—and we can put in the guns and gangs task force, we can't change the bail rules unless the federal government is onside. It's time for the federal government to come to the table, and we look forward—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: People viewing this proceeding should not only be alarmed, but they have to just wonder: "Whose side is this guy on? Who is he protecting? Is he protecting the great public in Ontario or is he protecting bureaucrats in a system that's failing public safety in Ontario?"

That's really what's happening here on a regular, consistent basis with this government. I'm not sure what he's afraid of. Pull back the curtains. The system is failing Ontarians on a regular basis. People are dying; innocent people are dying in the sanctity of their own homes. Will you stand up and say you're going to do something about it, and not fight our debate tomorrow, not try to close off debate, and give the people of Ontario and the people of this assembly, who represent Ontarians, an opportunity to take a good look—an inside look at what's happening—at the failings of the system and work together to correct it?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The debate issues are in the Speaker's hands, not mine. When we moved for reverse onus bail for serious gun crimes, I don't remember the support of the honourable member. When we moved for mandatory minimums for serious gun crimes, I don't remember the support of the honourable member. When we moved to get the federal government to toughen the bail laws for young offenders, the member opposite was nowhere to be seen. When we heard the Prime Minister's proposals for federal crime legislation, and I raised toughening bail laws, the honourable member scoffed. He only wanted to talk about the Prime Minister's proposal.

I say to the honourable member, it's fine just to chase the headline, but when you do, you will always be behind, sir. We want your assistance in toughening the laws

that protect our communities—assistance rather than rhetoric from you—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I've had a 15- or 20-year history of fighting for victims of crime, and if this minister wants to attack my personal integrity and wants to attack my motivation, that is not going to stand up to any kind of scrutiny at all. We're asking legitimate questions; the public are asking legitimate questions. We have real victims of crime because of failings of a system that you are responsible for, Attorney General, your crown law office making decisions that impact the public safety of every one of us—every one of us, and we've seen lives lost as a result of the failings. We are asking you to do something about it. Stop defending a system that's failing the people of Ontario. When will you start doing that?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: When we propose to do something, the honourable member is not there. When we propose to toughen the bail legislation, we can't count on his support. We do need your support. When we propose to end the two-for-one remission credit, I don't hear the honourable member's support. When we propose to ask the Harper government to toughen the laws to protect Ontarians, with which they have control, I don't see the honourable member's support.

So what I say to him is, when we invest in extra police officers, when we invest in guns and gangs task forces, when we work with the police, we do need the honourable member's support and his party's support to get the federal government to toughen and change the rules with which we all must comply, which deal with the dangerous and serious offenders. When will you stand up for the people of our communities and join with us and ask Harper to change the rules?

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Acting Premier. Seven months ago, the McGuinty government commenced its so-called Second Career program amidst television ads, radio ads and newspaper ads. The McGuinty government couldn't congratulate itself enough about the so-called Second Career program. Now, seven months later, while 230,000 Ontarians have been laid off from their jobs, only 1,100 of those workers have enrolled in the much-ballyhooed Second Career program. That's less than one half of one per cent of the workers who have lost their jobs.

Will the McGuinty government now admit that its much-boasted-about Second Career program has been a dismal and total flop?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm sure the honourable member would never want to leave the impression that Second Career is the only program that's available to laid-off workers in the province of Ontario. Through Employ-

ment Ontario, 900,000 Ontarians every year have access to support in everything from job search through to training, both long-term and short-term. In terms of short-term training, over the last year we've had about 13,000 people come forward.

As the honourable member is aware, as part of the budget, we announced that we would be coming forward with a longer-term training program, which went into effect in June, with advertising in July. Since then, we've seen in the most recent statistics about 1,300 people come forward and a lot of very-good-news stories. At the time of introducing it, we made a commitment that we would continue to monitor the program, and if we found that there—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: This is so typical of the McGuinty government. You ask them about their much-boasted-about Second Career program, and they try to talk about everything else but.

But there is a real tragedy here: 230,000 workers who have lost their jobs, lost their livelihoods, many of them losing their homes, many of them losing their families, and the McGuinty government's sole response was the so-called Second Career. You couldn't spend enough money on the television advertising; you couldn't spend enough money on the radio advertising. I'm sure some of you have arthritis in your shoulders from slapping yourselves on the back so many times. But 1,100 workers: That's all who signed up. Do you know why? Because there aren't any jobs. You can talk about retraining all you want; there are fewer jobs this week than there were last week.

When is the McGuinty government going to get it through its thick head that the issue is jobs? You can talk retraining all you want; people want jobs.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very happy to talk about the 13,000 people who have come forward for short-term training over the last year, I'm very happy to talk about the 1,300 who have come for longer-term training over the last couple of months, and I'm also very happy to talk about the individuals themselves.

Let me tell the honourable member about Second Career. Let me tell him about William, a father of four who was a finishing operator at Shorewood Packaging for 22 years. Through Second Career, he is attending St. Lawrence College to become a child and youth worker. Let me tell you about Sherry Marsh, who was laid off as a sales person from a local furniture store. Second Career is helping her to pursue studies at Georgian College as a registered practical nurse. Sherry said, "Second Career is allowing me to pursue not just another job, but a job in a stable, secure field where workers get a pension and benefits." Let me tell the honourable member about Robert Gissing, who was laid off from various tech companies—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: You know, anywhere else in the world, if a program had a sign-up rate of less than one

half of one per cent, people would say, "There's a problem here." I know if my son came home from school and said, "I got less than one half of one per cent in a test," he would say, "I've got a problem, Dad." But the McGuinty government insists on continuing this fraud, continues to insist that the answer to hundreds of thousands of workers losing their job is a Second Career program that half the workers laid off can't get into. Most of those who lost their job lost it before Second Career was announced, and many who have tried to get into it find that they don't meet the exemption, the exception and the exclusion clauses that are part of it.

When is the McGuinty government going to level with laid-off workers? Your Second Career program may have involved lots of advertising, but it's a flop in terms of—

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

1050

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member knows he is wrong. He is wrong when he stands up and singles out one program of a series of programs and says that that is our only response to laid-off workers. Through Employment Ontario, 900,000 workers every year are receiving support. Of those, in the past year, 13,000 have come forward for short-term training.

Our government acknowledged that there was a problem—that we had no long-term training programs available—and over the course of the summer, we brought forward Second Career. At the time of launching Second Career, I made a commitment that we would continue to monitor the program and that, if we found there were obstacles, we would remove those obstacles. On Friday, I stood up and outlined a series of changes to the Second Career program that will make it more accessible so that we can have more Ontarians showing the good-news stories that I just shared with the Legislature.

POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Acting Premier—and it's nice to know that the McGuinty government feels good about a Second Career program that has less than one half of 1% of laid-off workers signing up. But I want to ask about poverty. The Premier says that Ontarians understand that poverty can wait. I have news for the Premier. An Environics poll released today shows that more than 80% of Ontarians agree that government action on poverty is needed now and it's needed now more than ever. When will the McGuinty government listen and take action against poverty instead of telling impoverished people to wait, wait, wait?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the contrary: The honourable member wants to insist on what he thinks he heard, but it's not what was said and it's not reflective of the actions that are being taken. As the Premier had the opportunity to say in the Legislature last week, we are on track to deliver the poverty strategy, which has been the subject of what I might argue is an unprecedented amount of effort on behalf of a lot of the senior leadership in our

government. Even in these times, which recognize that there are challenges in the economy, we're committed to working in a way that sets real targets for the measurable improvement in the reduction of poverty in our society. The honourable member can claim as many times as he wants that this is not true, but these are the actions that we're taking. That strategy will be delivered in December, as was promised.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government keeps talking about its long-term plan to reduce poverty. Last week, the McGuinty government released its fall economic statement, where it had an opportunity to take action. According to Environics, 90% of Ontarians want more affordable housing. Was there any action on affordable housing? No. Eighty-seven per cent want an above-poverty minimum wage. Any action on that? No. Eighty-five per cent want more low-cost, affordable child care. Any action on that? No. Seventy-seven per cent want increases to social assistance benefits. Any action on that? No.

When is the McGuinty government going to stop talking about poverty and actually start doing something about poverty?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member wants to operate in an environment that pretends that the people of the province of Ontario aren't aware that each and every year there has been an increase in the minimum wage. The people of the province of Ontario, unlike the honourable member, don't pretend that there haven't been increases in social assistance. The people of the province of Ontario are very aware that the honourable member's own party makes great comments in question period, but when it comes to voting, doesn't stand up and support the development of programs like those that are targeted at children—the Ontario child benefit.

The people of the province of Ontario know that our government committed to bringing forward a poverty strategy. That is on track to be announced in December and will reflect our ongoing commitment to the targeted reduction of poverty in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the McGuinty government talks about something that might happen in the future. Yes, the child benefit might do something in 2012. All the McGuinty government has done this year is take away the back-to-school clothing allowance from the poorest kids in the province, and you're taking away the winter clothing allowance from the poorest kids in the province.

Minister, you'd be wise to recall something that happened in the last really terrible economic downturn—the Great Depression. Harry Hopkins, one of the people who had to deal with it in the United States, said, "People don't eat in the long run. They eat every day." What is your plan to take on poverty now, as it grows worse, instead of talking about, "In the long run, the McGuinty government might do something"? What's the action plan now?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the contrary, even John Campey, executive director of the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, said in March that it's reassuring to see that the government has responded to the calls for poverty reduction with some concrete initiatives. The focus on more employment training for Ontarians who are coping with the changing environment and more ESL funding and training for newcomers is recognition that a good job is one of the pathways out of poverty.

I heard the honourable member from Hamilton say in response to the name John Campey, "Well, he's a Liberal." The honourable member ought to get real on knowing whose voice is behind these issues. We're coming forward for the first time with a plan that has the opportunity for targeted reduction in poverty, but it supports initiatives that have been taken: Ontario child benefit; minimum wage increases; social housing assistance increases; \$100 million to affordable housing; a new dental program; student nutrition program funding doubled—all of these practical initiatives to help people—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. On Thursday, I urged you to speak with your counterpart the Minister of Labour to represent the concerns of some 25,000 small businesses that have presented letters on the mandatory WSIB policy your government is poised to introduce. This would be a new cost for small business—some \$11,000 on average.

My question is simple: Did you discuss the issue with Minister Fonseca, and if so, what was the result of that conversation?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can tell the member opposite is that I did meet with the CFIB and we had a wholesome discussion on this proposed legislation, if passed, how it would work and the phases it would go through.

We're trying to address a level playing field in construction. Right now it's not a level playing field. There are some who come on to construction sites that are not paying their fair share, not paying their premiums of insurance. We want to make sure that all those working on those construction sites are covered. We want to make sure that those workers, if they do get injured or hurt, are covered and they have benefits in place to take care of themselves.

I hope that the member can understand that and would come aboard to this good policy. This is an initiative that was backed by the Ontario construction industry, the secretariat, the WSIB. We have met with the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. They understand—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm asking the Minister of Small Business: Is he representing the interests of small business? I think you fail to realize just how serious this is for small business.

On the weekend, I attended a 65th wedding anniversary, an event where you don't usually get into too much politics. And what was the topic of discussion? Your mandatory coverage of WSIB.

This morning, before I got in—here is an e-mail I just received, and I'd like to quote from it: "It is difficult enough to keep the bottom line in the black, without the pending changes. Our rate is in the 10% range, which applied to what I take as a salary will be the best part of \$10,000. Removing that much from the bottom line would make me rethink the viability of these businesses." These business owners don't want your mandatory coverage, and frankly, they think it's just another money grab, another tax on small business.

Minister, last week I asked you if part of your mandate is to help small business. You said, "Absolutely." Well, why aren't you helping small business now?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Once again, I would say to this member that I cannot understand how he does not find that the importance of the health and safety of those workers on the construction site is paramount to all of this.

I want to just read him a quote. Doug Chalmers, director of Aluma Systems and past chair of the Sarnia Construction Association, said: "Congratulations; absolutely brilliant. This will make Ontario a safer workplace and improve the quality of life for all of us. This is about fairness, it's about health and safety, it's about levelling the playing field, it's about addressing the underground economic activity in construction."

I would hope that the member would get on board and get with it.

1100

YOUTH CRIME

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Acting Premier: Well over a year ago, the government asked Ontario's former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry and former Speaker Alvin Curling to prepare a report on how to address youth violence. Meanwhile, we see kids killing kids and stories of street violence hitting the headlines almost every day.

Mounting public concern is everywhere. Where is that report?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the member for the question. We're all looking forward to the report. We're all looking forward to the public release and discussion of the report. I want to thank, in advance, former Chief Justice McMurtry and former Speaker Alvin Curling for undertaking this task.

It's something that we all believe is extremely important for the future of our communities. We have taken steps as a government to invest in our communities, to make sure young people have opportunities to keep them

out of violent activity and gang activity to begin with. An approach this government has taken which is extremely important is to recognize that prevention is the best crime control approach. We're very much looking forward to the release of that report.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would think many people are looking forward to the report. It's been over a year since they were commissioned to do the work.

We know that there are many, many government reports, however, that have been commissioned and they only sit on shelves, gathering dust. So today, will the Acting Premier pledge that recommendations that will come in this report will be implemented and that government is committed to providing the resources? Or is this another report that's destined to languish without funding and support while the roots of youth violence continue to spread unabated by your lack of action?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're very much looking forward to the release of the report. As everybody knows, they need to go through certain compilations and translation etc. before they're actually publicly released.

We're absolutely committed to ensuring that our young people have the opportunities that will enable them to reach their full potential. I talked about community investment funds. We have programs to ensure that our youth have employment and training opportunities, that my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has been working very hard on; and access programs, to make sure that our young people have opportunities in colleges and universities and apprenticeship training. There are 100,000 more people in colleges and universities now than when we started; 150,000 of them are receiving grants or assistance of some form. This is access to future opportunities.

I'm looking forward to the report, as I know my friend is, and we'll be able to discuss how to move forward on this in the future.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in June you announced a new Second Career program to help recently laid-off workers go back to school to get a new job. A program like this is crucial at a time when so many people are being laid off in the manufacturing sector and cannot find jobs that match their current skill sets. Training and education are becoming more and more important, and we know that we must reach out to as many people as possible, to make Ontario workers as competitive as possible in today's job market.

Over the past couple of weeks we've heard in this House criticism of Second Career and claims that this program is ineffective and inaccessible, even though I'm sure those who have taken advantage of the program would argue otherwise. Minister, what would you say to the constituents in my riding who have been laid off and

who are hesitant to apply to Second Career for fear they would not meet the criteria?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the question because it gives me a chance to reiterate once again that there is support in the province of Ontario for laid-off workers through Employment Ontario; about 900,000 people a year come forward.

This government recognized, however, that within the variety of programs there was no program for long-term training—those interested in going to a community college or a private career college for longer-term training. Therefore, in June we announced the details of the Second Career program and set a target of 20,000 workers over the course of three years. Second Career assists with the costs associated with retraining, including tuition, books and living expenses.

At the time, we acknowledged that this was a new program—in fact, unique in Canada—and we were going to monitor it very closely to make sure there were no obstacles to workers coming forward. And Friday, at George Brown College, I was pleased to announce further changes to the system to enhance it and to remove some of these—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. The fact that you're making changes to make the program more accessible will be good news for many of my constituents.

I recently met with a constituent from my riding who applied for the program but was denied funding because he went back to work. After being laid off, he was forced to take on a minimum-wage job in order to make ends meet, and is now looking for help to set him on a new career path. He's very eager to upgrade his skills but cannot afford to take the time off work and pay to go to college, all the while taking care of his family. I'm sure that his story is not unlike other laid-off workers looking to apply for Second Career. I also know that many people are unable to apply for the program because they were laid off prior to the year cut-off. Could you please tell me and my constituents what you plan to do to expand access to this invaluable program?

Hon. John Milloy: Certainly. I'm very happy to provide some of the details of what we announced Friday to enhance Second Career and remove some of the obstacles to allow more people to go forward.

First, we're pushing back the entry date. If you've been laid off any time since January 2005, you can now apply for Second Career. This will be particularly helpful to workers in the forestry sector who have lost their jobs in the last few years. Secondly, we recognize that there are situations where people have taken temporary employment just to make ends meet. We believe that they should have access to training too, so we're going to open up Second Career to include them. Third, in cases where the need is great, we'll consider additional financial assistance beyond \$28,000, based on individual circumstances.

In addition to these three main changes, we're working to make the application process easier to build in more flexibility around career options.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the finance minister. As you know, sadly, Ontario now joins Prince Edward Island as the only province in all of Canada to be in the red. Your predecessor, Minister Sorbara, had always set aside a \$1-billion reserve and then made a commitment to increase that reserve to \$1.5 billion. Shockingly, when you knew there were storm clouds on the horizon, when you knew 2008 would be a rough year, you cut that commitment in half, put the reserve at \$750 million and reduced the contingency fund by \$160 million. If you had kept to the path of your previous finance minister, we'd be in surplus today. Isn't that the true reason why you're in the red, as of last week?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Unlike the member opposite, we made the choice in the budget to continue to invest in health care, education and infrastructure, and we think those are the appropriate decisions. We think that the \$1.1 billion that's going out to municipalities in the next couple of weeks is a very good use of public money. We think there were deficits in health care and education left by his government, including a \$5.5-billion deficit. So, yes, we did reduce the reserve last year, we did reduce the contingency in order to create jobs, and we'll see the cranes around Ontario. I'm sure we will be joined by some other governments fairly soon in the deficit category. We will continue to make the proper investments in the areas that I know are not a priority for him. But we think hiring teachers, nurses—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, there's the nub of the problem. When you knew or you should have known that the economy was heading downhill, when you saw all the signs in the States, when every bank and every economist were saying that tough times were ahead, you chose to reduce the financial cushions of the province. You cut, basically, the reserve in half and reduced your contingency fund, and now we find ourselves in the red.

After that initial grave error, what did Dwight Duncan and Dalton McGuinty choose to do? Spend, spend, spend. In the first two quarters of this year, some \$325 million in unbudgeted spending to make this deficit situation even worse, even though you knew the Bank of Montreal in June had projected that our economy would crawl at 0.2% at most.

Minister, was it not a mistake to go into the spend, spend, spend mode when you should have had prudent spending and tried to help create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We think that the \$3.9 billion in infrastructure was a good expenditure. We think that the \$660-million debt repayment was a good expenditure. We think that the investments in health care and edu-

cation were good. The member opposite will cut health care. He'll cut education. He'll lay off people at the very time we shouldn't be.

I'd remind him what Diane Francis of the National Post said to him the other day: "While I think the deficit is very minuscule considering the size of the budget and considering the mess the world is in, I believe, unlike other Conservatives and business people, that the role of government is appropriate, to be a shock absorber and run deficits if you hit a bump in the economic road."

We are pursuing a policy to protect jobs and investment. Ontario will be better because of it.

1110

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Across Ontario, homeowners are getting whacked by this government's broken property assessment system. Fixed-income seniors may be forced out of their lifelong homes. Your only solution to date is a paltry \$250 plan that certainly won't help them.

How will this help seniors like those highlighted in yesterday's Liberal newspaper, who live in Richmond Hill and who will now be whacked with property tax bills in excess of \$7,000 and \$9,000?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the premise of the member's question is inaccurate. Assessment increases do not constitute property tax increases. The member likes to imply that they do; they don't.

The second point I would make to the member is that any increases as a result of this assessment will be phased in over four years.

The Ombudsman and a number of others have recognized the changes we've made to the system. We think the changes are appropriate. Assessment notices are continuing to go out across the province. But again, I stress to those people who are concerned that assessment increases do not constitute tax increases, and in terms of implementation, any assessment increase is to be implemented over four years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps the finance minister is not aware that when your home's property value goes up by \$200,000 and \$300,000, you can expect property tax increases.

The minister clearly will not admit that these four-year assessments are totally out of whack with the current economic climate. Properties are in fact losing value today, but assessments reflect values from January 1, 2008. Since the current economic tsunami, house prices have dropped by 10% or more in some locations. Fixed-income folks who are struggling to stay in their homes cannot bear this volatility and uncertainty.

Why won't this government consider keeping assessments at 2005 level values and freezing them there until properties are sold, as we have suggested?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What the member proposes would have different tax assessments for identical prop-

erties on the same street. It just doesn't work well. I would remind him that over four years, increases that are on assessment rolls do not have to become property tax increases. The member knows full well that it's the tax rate times the assessment value that determines that. Tax rates can be adjusted to reflect the increase.

The final thing I would say: When given a chance to help senior citizens with their property taxes, this member voted against the senior citizen property tax credit. I would say, with respect, \$250 is a lot of money in the first year, rising to \$600. The member tries to have it both ways. He won't defend seniors and property taxpayers. This government has and will continue to do so, even if—

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. David Zimmer: I too have a short but indeed important question for the Minister of Finance. Last week, I received a letter from Patricia Sillers, one of my constituents in Willowdale. She says in her letter, "Because I am a fixed-income pensioner living in Willowdale, I am worried about the new property assessment on my condominium. With the sudden downturn in the economy, my small nest egg has shrunk alarmingly, and the thought of my increased property taxes is truly scary.... There must be many folks in the same situation. This would be a terrible time to raise property taxes."

Speaker, through you to the minister, what are we going to do about this? It's a serious problem for fixed-income pensioners in Willowdale and Ontario.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member is quite right about assessment notices going out. Again, I introduced the—

Mr. Paul Miller: How come he's right and I'm wrong?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, unlike the NDP, he voted for the seniors' property tax credit. What a ridiculous lot over there.

I say to the member, he's right that an increase in assessment does not lead to a property tax increase. I thank him for supporting the seniors' property tax credit, which the NDP voted against three times. They know that this government protects and the NDP casts into the waves because they really don't care. This government did the seniors' property tax credit. It was the appropriate response, and we appreciated his support on that vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, I read with interest this weekend in the Toronto Star the article on property assessments. I know it's not easy for homeowners to appeal their assessments. I hear a lot about that in the constituency office. It's a complicated process. People don't understand it; they don't understand the method, the math, and they don't understand some of the philosophy behind it. In fact, the Ombudsman has even conducted an investigation into this issue.

Minister, has anything happened to make it easier for homeowners to deal with their assessment appeal notices?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes. The member opposite will be aware that the Ombudsman did quite a sweeping look at MPAC and what MPAC involves. There were 21 recommendations. I am pleased to tell the member that we've implemented all of those recommendations, including reverse onus, which is something that we thought was the appropriate course of action to take.

I'll remind the member of what the Ombudsman himself said: "The Municipal Property Assessment Corp. (MPAC) and the government have come closer to Getting it Right ... by implementing my recommendations for reforming property assessment in Ontario... newly introduced legislation will bring greater fairness to the system of property assessment and appeal."

Again, I stress that an increase in assessment does not necessarily mean an increase in property taxes, number one. Number two, the property tax credit for seniors like your constituent who corresponded with you will help people like that very directly. I only wish the NDP had voted for that instead of taking the kinds of—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Small Business. Minister, in today's economic environment, where we learn daily about small business failures and job losses, are you and your government prepared to give fair and preferential treatment to Ontario and Canadian companies bidding on services and goods for your government in order to keep the jobs here and people off welfare?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking this question.

Actually, our government has been working in a very systematic manner, since we took power in 2003, to make it easier for small businesses to sell to the government. We have made it easier for them to actually get onto the vendors' list so that they can be considered for business with the government. Not only that, but we have also taken steps to make it easier for them to sell to the government, that reduce the paperwork burden for them, so that it is not inconvenient for them to sell to the government.

I will be able to talk about more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, Minister, I don't believe that it's working.

Recently, the Ministry of Correctional Services tendered an RFP for sweaters to be worn by Ontario law enforcement officials. Specifically, they did specify a garment that was to be made by Ingo, a Waterloo-based company, and they were identified for future procurement. Lo and behold, once the tendering process was complete, a decision was made to purchase the garments from Mexico.

Considering the turbulent economic times, does the minister not agree with me that you should be doing all you can to advocate for small businesses and look at a made-in-Ontario policy when possible?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: As I said earlier, the first step in selling any goods to the government is to make sure that you get on the vendors' list. The second step is that you have to then make a competitive bid. The third way we have made it easier for the small businesses is that in case they don't get the business in the first place, at least we tell them why they didn't get it so that the next time around they are in a more competitive position to bid for the government business. Do you know that has never happened under other governments, when the Conservatives were in power? We have made it much, much easier for them to get onto the vendors list and sell to the government. In cases where they fail, they know why they failed so that they can be in a better position to bid for the business the next time around.

I agree that we have to make sure that small businesses are in the position to get to some of the Ontario government business, because—

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

1120

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade—I'll give you a rest today, Speaker: Minister, last week in the *SooToday*, in an article by the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, he claimed that \$23 million was approved through the Ministry of Economic Development to support the creation of a new pipe plant. Has this money been approved specifically for the creation of a new pipe plant? Has this program been approved?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I say to the member, he will be aware of the process that's in place. I obviously work closely with the member from Sault Ste. Marie to ensure that the various programs that are in place follow the procedures and programs in order to allow for an official announcement.

I appreciate that the member is standing up, presumably in support of this, and I know that the member from Sault Ste. Marie does as well. When it's appropriate for it to be publicly announced, we will certainly do that, but I want to add that this is a program that's going to benefit that community in a wide variety of ways. Obviously, the member is seeking to highlight that, and I appreciate that.

Mr. Paul Miller: The MPP for Sault Ste. Marie also said in his article, "Hopefully Essar Algoma Steel management and union can come to an agreement that would see a similar facility opened in Sault Ste. Marie." A few weeks ago, the president of Local 2251 met with Essar Steel Algoma, but there were no negative discussions like the MPP alludes to.

The person who can tell us if the \$23 million is slated for a pipe mill in Sault Ste. Marie is the minister. Will he

tell us now if a pipe mill will be located in Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I know that the member advocates on behalf of his community. Certainly the member for Sault Ste. Marie does as well. He has been doing so for the past five-plus years as the member, and he does a very good job.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I agree. He'll continue to do that. I know that the member certainly wouldn't want to be critical of a member of provincial Parliament standing up for his particular region and his riding. If he is adding his voice of support, we appreciate that. If he is seeking to criticize the member for standing up for his riding, I beg to disagree. The member of Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Oraziotti, is doing a fantastic job advocating on behalf of his community. He works with all members of this government in order to get the best for his community, and we certainly all applaud him for that.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. As I'm sure is the case for most of my colleagues, many of my constituents own or work for small or medium-sized businesses. In fact, 99% of Ontario's firms are small and medium enterprises that generate over \$250 billion in economic activity annually. When small businesses are starting up in my riding or are in a position to expand, there is a certain number of permits and licences that are needed, not only from this level of government but from municipalities and the federal government as well. While these regulatory steps are necessary, the act of figuring out which ones apply to one's business endeavours can be overwhelming.

Minister, what is this government doing to make it easier for small businesses in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex to get on their feet or, as well, to expand?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to answer this question at this time, especially given that October has been recognized as Small Business Month. The McQuinty government knows that many entrepreneurs can spend weeks trying to research all the permits and licences that they may need to expand their business. Having owned a small business myself, I understand this first-hand.

One of the ways that our government does offer help is with BizPal, which stands for business permits and licences. It's a free online service that saves businesses time by providing a customized list of the permits and licences they may need from time to time from all levels of government: municipal, provincial and federal. It all comes to them within minutes and it's offered up through Service Ontario. BizPal helps small businesses to be efficient and helps build a better relationship between government—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm glad to hear that this government is making strides in helping Ontario's small businesses, especially in these economically challenging times.

The minister mentioned that BizPal combines the permits and licences from all levels of government, including municipalities. I'm sure that municipalities in my riding appreciate the help in trying to streamline any permits and licensing that small businesses in our communities need. However, I would appreciate some assurance that BizPal is in fact helping our municipalities deal with potential overlap and inefficiencies and that it's working efficiently. Can the minister assure the House that BizPal is helping our municipalities and not creating another unnecessary burden on them?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, I sure can give that assurance. Small businesses have come to expect nothing less from the McGuinty government. I can tell you that, to date, there are some 66 Ontario municipalities, representing 54% of the province's population, which offer the BizPal service, with many others eager—in fact, they are lining up—to plug into this service. That's no surprise, because it's such a great service. We've heard great reactions from all over Ontario. From Muskoka, the mayor has said that this innovative online tool has simplified the process of obtaining business permits and other regulatory requirements.

I'm pleased to hear feedback like this as BizPal is launched in more and more municipalities. It's a service that businesses have come to expect from our government and it's one we're pleased to deliver.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Minister of Small Business. Is the minister aware that his government's hostile business climate is forcing a 40-year-old manufacturing company in Mississauga, in the minister's own city, Plastmade Industries Ltd., to consider moving its assembly operations to Mexico?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me tell you, this is small business month, and I had the opportunity to go around and visit a lot of locations and see a lot of our small businesses in action. I'm very proud to say that our small businesses are actually doing well and are alive and are thriving.

Just to give you an example, last week, actually on Friday, I had the chance to visit Kawartha Lakes, along with the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. There I had the chance to visit five businesses in Kawartha Lakes which are doing extremely well.

There's no doubt that some businesses are facing some challenges, especially in the manufacturing sector, and our government has worked very closely with them to make sure that their needs get addressed. We have the programs to help them out, not only to actually sell their products abroad, but to become more efficient and productive in Ontario as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, it's obvious that the minister didn't tour Plastmade in Mississauga, as I did on October 17, touring this impressive facility and meeting its productive workforce. But it's a shrinking workforce. Plastmade now has 40 employees, down from over 100 a while ago.

The accumulated burden of this government's Liberal red tape is forcing small businesses out of the country or out of business entirely. We are hearing about the newly overzealous and authoritarian attitude within the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Combined with this government's crushing tax burden and the uncertain economic climate, it's no surprise that companies like Plastmade are seeking alternatives in order to survive.

When will this minister stand up for small business, as is his mandate? When will he give small business a reason for hope in Ontario's economic future?

1130

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The member opposite has quoted one business. Let me give you three examples in Mississauga of the companies that have been doing extremely well that I had the chance to visit last week.

Actually, I had the chance to visit a company called Icynene. They are in the insulation business. They have created a real niche market in that business, and this company has grown to become a \$100-million company.

Then I had the chance to visit Promotion, which is in the automation business. It used to be in the auto business, but now they're producing parts for the nuclear industry. So they have done a great transition in that business.

Then I had the chance to visit Methes, which is in the biofuel diesel business. They have actually created a real niche market in that business.

There is another company called 2Source in Mississauga, which has created a great niche in the bushings business.

So there are a lot of good businesses around that are doing extremely well and—

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

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services: The minister has a committee that's reviewing right now the storage, handling, location and transport of propane. Strangely, the role that industry self-regulation played in last August's propane explosion is not being examined at all. There's no mention of it in the public discussion document. Will the minister explicitly instruct the propane safety review to examine the Technical Standards and Safety Authority's model of self-regulation and self-governance?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: A couple of weeks ago, I actually asked the two prominent experts in Canada to look at propane rules and regulations, and that report is due in 45 days. I expect it to be in the first week of

November, and they are doing great work. Actually, I have asked both opposition critics to submit whatever they think is appropriate that this review needs to look at, and I encourage them to do it. Their mandate is to give me the recommendations so that we can improve propane safety, because safety comes first for us. We need to make sure that consumers are protected, our households are protected and the residents of Ontario are protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the minister doesn't open his mail, but I did send a letter of request asking him that very issue that I'm speaking to him about today, and that is the fact that we have to look at the entire governance structure, not just the regulations. The propane safety review is only focusing on the regulations, not the regulator itself.

Ontarians know that there's something fundamentally wrong with the regulator. It took a minister's order for the regulator to conduct an Ontario-wide compliance check, where it found—and we know this—that half of the province's large propane facilities are out of compliance. Seven posted immediate hazards as a result, yet the minister refuses to have his team of experts look at the regulator itself. Why won't the minister explicitly instruct, as I asked in the letter and as I'm asking again today, the propane safety review to examine the TSSA's self-regulation model?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It's really interesting for this member to ask this question. This regulation model was started under the NDP, and the Conservatives implemented it.

Having said that, I think the TSSA over the years has done a very good job. I'm very proud of the fact that they have done that great job, but we need to make sure that Ontario residents are safe. That's why we ordered this review. I want to make sure that the review is conducted as thoroughly as possible so that the residents of Ontario are always safe. I'm glad for the kind of work they're doing, and I want to encourage the member to submit the kinds of recommendations they have to the panel.

Interjection.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I said "to the panel."

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Menova Energy Inc., a company which is based in Ottawa, is a 100% Canadian-owned-and-operated company committed to providing affordable solar energy solutions for the industrial, commercial and institutional markets. Menova's Power-Spar system is a technology which provides solar electricity, heating and lighting solutions. The platform is compatible with geothermal and thermal air conditioning applications. The key benefits of the Power-Spar system are green, zero-emission generation of heat and electricity; immunity from rising energy costs, since the price of energy from the sun will not escalate with time; amortize energy costs at about 50% of what consumers currently

pay for propane and electric heat; and a reliable and independent system that assists your office or business to function without interruption during power shortages, high costs, peak demand or blackouts.

Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to foster green technology companies, such as Menova, in the province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question in regard to Menova. The new economy in the 21st century is going to be green. The question is, where is that commercialization going to happen? Menova is a great example of the types of companies that are building out right now in the province of Ontario. Menova is due to an Ottawa-based innovation in regard to a new product called the Power-Spar. That Power-Spar is being installed at the new Wal-Mart in Markham, one of the largest ones in the world. It's a demonstration plant for Wal-Mart but it's also part of our innovation demonstration funding.

I was talking to the president and he said, "This" project is a result "... of Ontario's growing world leadership in solar energy. The Menova technology was developed in Ontario and will remain in Ontario thanks to the forward-looking policies and commitment from this provincial government"—Dave Gerwing, president of Menova Energy Inc.

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

I wish to inform the House that the ruling and response to the point of order raised by the Minister of Tourism on Thursday last will be given this afternoon prior to orders of the day. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Norm Miller: The McGuinty government has announced it will exercise prudence through uncertain financial times. I would like to inform the government members opposite of the meaning of "prudent" from the Canadian Oxford Dictionary: "(1) careful to provide for the future." "(2) discreet or cautious; circumspect." "(3) having or exercising good judgment."

Let's take a look at some examples of this government's prudent spending: \$6 million to remove the "C" from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. logo; \$2.3 million for the opening gala of Caesars Windsor casino—that's in addition to the \$400 million for casino renovations; \$2 million for the incomplete report by Alvin Curling on youth violence; \$219,000 to redesign the Ontario trillium logo so it looks like either the Liberal Party logo or three men in a tub—one or the other; \$200,000 by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal in court costs to try to gag lottery fraud victim Bob

Edmonds; \$600,000 to fight parents of autistic children in court.

The question is, is it prudent to increase overall government spending from \$68 billion to \$96 billion in good times so there's no money left for bad times? The answer is, absolutely no. Shame on the McGuinty government for not being better guardians of taxpayers' hard-earned money.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak to this House about our government's initiatives in ensuring worker safety across Ontario. Ontario's workers are among the most productive in this nation, and our government is committed to having the highest safety standards to protect workers and their families. I know that this is of critical importance in my own community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

As a key part of our injury prevention strategy, inspectors blitzed industrial workplaces over the last month to eliminate specific hazards that could lead to falls. Prior safety blitzes have already yielded tremendous results for both employees and for businesses.

The Ministry of Labour compliance program that ran from April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2008, reduced the workplace injury rate by 20%, more than 50,000 incidents. Because of the drop in the annual rate of lost-time injuries, employers have avoided about \$5 billion in direct and indirect costs during the last four years.

Reduced injuries also lead to less strain on the health care system and fewer workers off the job, more productive communities and more family-friendly workplaces. They also increase productivity for Ontario's economy.

The McGuinty government recognizes the skill and value of Ontario's workers, and while there is more to do, our government will continue to work hard to ensure the safety of workers across the province, in each of our communities and in each of our families.

LEFTY THE GOOSE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As I'm sure you all know, I don't usually stand up to defend a lefty, but today I want to talk about a lefty in my riding. This lefty has garnered much public sympathy and I've had more than 80 calls and e-mails to my office to save Lefty.

To those members of the third party who think I may be standing up for one of them, I apologize. The lefty I'm speaking about today is a much higher form of life—a Canada goose that lives in Paul Lindsay Park in Stittsville—so named because it is missing its right wing. Lefty is unable to fly south for the winter, causing many people to worry it will freeze or starve.

As I said, I've received more than 80 calls and e-mails about Lefty last week, so I am working with the Canadian Wildlife Service, an agency of Environment Canada, which is responsible for migratory birds, to find a way to help poor Lefty.

I want to take this opportunity to thank those residents of Stittsville who have contacted my office about Lefty and let them know that migratory birds are not a responsibility of the province but of the federal government, but I am doing my best to make sure their concerns are heard by that government and something is done for Lefty.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: The October 2007 temporary care assistance directive, under "Duration of Care," stated its intent to be available to children under 18 years of age for as long as they require it, and that it may be only needed for weeks or it may be needed for years. This has been deleted from the new policy.

It also said that an adult providing temporary care may be a person awarded legal guardianship or custody by a court but has no legal obligation to support the child, and can include both temporary and permanent orders.

The July 2008 policy changes so that the existence of any legal custody order, whether it be permanent or temporary, is grounds to be denied this assistance. In every case where grandparents are raising their grandchildren, they always face their grandchildren being taken away by the parents, even with a custody order; it's always temporary.

Also, the new July directive uses "settled intent" as the grounds to deny TCA: the child's length of stay in the home; physical accommodation in the home for the child; the existence of a legal custody order; involvement in medical, educational and recreational activities of the child; and/or ongoing decisions about the health and well-being of the child.

A foster parent, unrelated, who receives \$900 a month as a caregiver is expected to be involved in all of these usual child-rearing activities, but a related grandparent who does these same things, who receives \$231 for the first child and \$188 for each additional child, under the new directive faces being cut off from this meagre subsistence funding.

This financial attack on grandparents, these unsung heroes trying to raise their grandchildren as part of their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: Many workers in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence and many workers in the city of Toronto are perplexed as to why they are not eligible for employment insurance. Many of these workers have paid into employment insurance for years and years, yet when they try to apply for insurance benefits, they are told they do not qualify because they live in Ontario.

The question I have is, why is it that the federal employment insurance surplus now stands at a total of over \$54 billion that the workers have paid into, yet the workers, when they ask for a contribution back to them in

insurance while they try to find another job, are not eligible? They say they're eligible in Nova Scotia, they are eligible in Quebec, they are eligible in PEI, yet in Ontario, if you're out of work, you can't get employment insurance.

They think this is unfair. They have asked all of us in the province of Ontario who sit here in this Legislature to stand up on their behalf and ask that they be treated, in these hard times, like workers in other provinces.

The question is, why do the workers in Ontario not qualify for employment insurance when they have already contributed to it?

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Ted Arnott: The trains that take people to work every day are critical to our economy, environment and quality of life. That's why I was pleased this spring when GO Transit announced its environmental assessment to extend rail service from Georgetown through Acton to Guelph and Kitchener–Waterloo. Working with the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, we have supported this vision for years.

Even though the McGuinty Liberals' financial mismanagement has weakened our economy, the need for this GO service extension remains well established. If the McGuinty government demands that municipalities adhere to its Places to Grow population growth targets, it has no excuse to delay this crucial transportation infrastructure project. It's crucial because of worsening traffic congestion, the still-high cost of gasoline, and our environmental obligations to future generations.

In a meeting I convened with representatives from GO Transit and the town of Halton Hills on October 9 here at Queen's Park, we discussed the many merits of this project. Mayor Rick Bonnette, Councillor John Duncan, and Director of Infrastructure Services Chris Mills and I all made a compelling case for this project, including a new stop in the Acton/Rockwood area. But without a commitment from the government of Ontario, these new trains will never even leave the station.

Future generations will look back and ask of us: Did we act? If not, why not? I urge the Minister of Transportation to act. I urge him to commit to make this project a goal.

1310

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Born and raised in Kitchener-Waterloo, I am proud to acknowledge that today is the University of Waterloo's Deans' Day here at Queen's Park.

The University of Waterloo celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. It's also my alma mater—St. Jerome's College, University of Waterloo. Deans' Day is an opportunity for the deans of various faculties to make themselves available all day at Queen's Park to meet with members and ministry staff and pose the question: "What

can we do to better serve your needs?"—a truly progressive approach in this global knowledge market.

The president of the university and vice chancellor is David Johnston, who is here meeting with ministries all day. He is joined today by a large delegation of deans, over 15 university staff and faculty, to whom I personally would like to say thank you.

The University of Waterloo was founded 50 years ago on the forward-looking premise that, with the help of community and business leaders, they would create a program to train engineers and technicians—not only classroom instruction but also with co-operative practical experience. This continues, with the training of highly qualified people on a global level: proof positive, in this competitive, knowledge-based global economy, that the University of Waterloo continues to be a world leader.

It's with great pleasure that we welcome these world leaders to Queen's Park today.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Phil McNeely: The McGuinty government is setting the most aggressive wait time targets for general surgeries in Canada as part of an expansion of its successful wait times strategy. We are the first government to disclose wait times in Ontario's hospitals, available at www.ontariowaittimes.com. That's why I am proud of our government for expanding our strategy so that wait times continue to decline.

Since 2003, wait times in five key areas have been reduced: cataract surgery by 63%, down 195 days; hip replacements by 52%, down 181 days; knee replacements by 51%, down 228 days; cancer surgery by 19%, down 15 days; angiography by 53%, down 30 days; angioplasty by 50%, down 14 days; MRI by 18%, down 22 days; and CT scans by 46%, 31 days less. Our wait times strategy is working, and more Ontarians are getting the care they need sooner.

What's more, the Champlain LHIN is receiving over \$1.8 million from our government to fund an additional 1,477 surgeries. Minister Caplan was in town recently to announce that. The Ottawa Hospital is receiving more than \$156,000 to fund 26 more surgeries.

Thanks to our government for showing real leadership on wait times and giving our LHINs the money needed to fund more surgeries in our communities.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to inform members that nominations are now being accepted for the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

Each school day, parents hand over their most precious gift—their children—to teachers. With this gesture of trust comes the challenge of guiding our youth to becoming effective, empowered and creative adults. The McGuinty government commends the work that

teachers and school board staff do in helping students to reach their full potential, and the Premier's Awards are a great way to recognize those individuals who make a difference in education.

Starting today, parents, students, educators and community members can nominate an outstanding educator or support staff worker for an award. The deadline for nominations is January 31, 2009.

The Minister of Education recently launched the third year of this highly successful program that, over the last two years, has seen more than 2,000 nominations be received and 30 educators and support staff workers be recognized with this prestigious award.

These awards signify the McGuinty government's commitment to our education system and understanding that teachers are its backbone. So I encourage all members in the House and all Ontarians to recognize the efforts of Ontario's teachers, not just until January 30 but throughout the whole year.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD PASSENGERS ON MOTORCYCLES), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ENFANTS PASSAGERS SUR DES MOTOCYCLETTES)

Ms. Jacek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers / *Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire la conduite et l'utilisation de motocyclettes transportant des enfants comme passagers.*

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.

Ms. Helena Jacek: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit driving or operating a motorcycle on a highway while a person under the age of 14 is a passenger on the motorcycle with a view to promoting safety on Ontario's roads and protecting youth from preventable injuries.

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with hundreds of signatures to do with 911 services in Parry Sound–Muskoka. It reads:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is considering relocating emergency ambulance and fire dispatch services currently provided by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service to the city of Barrie; and

“Whereas up to 40% of all calls received are from cellphones from people unfamiliar with the area; and

“Whereas Parry Sound–Muskoka residents have grave concerns about the effect on emergency response times if dispatch services are provided by dispatchers who are not familiar with the area; and

“Whereas 16 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care-funded jobs, held by qualified communication officers from local communities, may be lost as a result of the relocation of dispatch services to the city of Barrie,

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario put the safety, health and economic concerns of the people of Parry Sound–Muskoka ahead of government efficiency interests and ensure that emergency dispatch services continue to be provided locally by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service.”

I support this petition.

HOSPICES

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from the Hospice Association of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

“Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support and respite care to terminally ill individuals;

“Whereas a residential hospice (usually about 8 to 10 beds) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill patients and support to their families;

“Whereas hospice services are provided free of charge;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes.”

I support this and I'll affix my name to it.

FERTILITY TREATMENT

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the prevalence and growing incidence of infertility in our population is a medical issue that demands the attention of our public health care system and should be placed on the agenda for funding;

“Whereas fertility treatment, including in vitro fertilization, is a proven medical solution that is unfairly limited to those with the financial means to pursue it and that it should receive significant coverage through the Ontario health care system as soon as possible;

"Whereas in vitro fertilization should be fully funded when deemed medically necessary, without discrimination based on cause or gender; and

"Whereas it is long overdue that financial assistance for fertility treatment be offered to Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, request that the Ontario provincial government address this important issue. We strongly support the inclusion of financial assistance by the Ontario Ministry of Health under the Ontario health care program for all fertility treatment for Ontarians, male and female."

I've signed this petition, along with folks from Tilbury, North Buxton, Cottam, Wheatley and Chatham.

LOGGING ROUTE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with forestry and logging trucks going through the village of Restoule. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Nipissing forest management plan proposes to use Hawthorne Drive in Restoule, which features a single-lane bridge and narrow and steep sections; and

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"Whereas area residents have grave concerns about community safety, traffic speed, truck noise and general wear and tear of Hawthorne Drive and the bridge in the village of Restoule; and

"Whereas the proposed route travels past the Restoule Canadian Legion and two churches; and

"Whereas alternative routes are possible via Odorizzi Road and Block 09-056;

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

"That the government of Ontario put the safety and concerns of the people of Restoule ahead of logging interests and ensure an alternate route is selected for the Nipissing forest management plan."

I support this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce this petition in respect to Bill 33, affectionately known as a grandparents' bill. 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" the member from Niagara Falls.

"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 bill.

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas workplace harassment (physical and psychological) and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues and;

"Whereas employers will have a legal avenue/obligation to deal with workplace harassment and violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment, and;

"Whereas Bill 29 would make it law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment, and oblige employers to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health And Safety Act."

I agree with it, have signed it and send it to the table with page Emily.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition here that was circulated by Kay Dryden of Falconer Drive in Meadowvale, Streetsville. It is to the Ontario Legislative of Assembly. It's about the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I’ve got a petition against illegal guns in cars.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I’m very pleased today to introduce a petition on behalf of Heather Hughes, who lives in Mississauga, Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and will sign it and give it to page Laura.

LUPUS

Mr. Kim Craitor: I’m pleased to introduce this petition. As you know, October is Lupus Awareness Month. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by public health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of other comparable magnitude and severity; and

“Whereas no safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

I’m pleased and really proud to sign my signature in support of this petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind members, and I’ve made this reminder on a number of occasions, we do need to look out for and ensure the health and safety of our interpreters. When you have your BlackBerry on your desk and you are speaking and your BlackBerry goes off, we can all hear this hum in the room. The hum is one thing, but we need to think about our interpreters, because that hum is very much humming in their ears. We do not want to cause ear damage or loss of hearing to our interpreters. So I would just caution and remind all members that if you’re going to be speaking, leave your BlackBerry outside, in the galleries, so that there’s no chance of it going off.

The member from Simcoe North.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government-appointed supervisor of the Huronia District Hospital (HDH) has recommended a merger of HDH with the Penetanguishene General Hospital (PGH);

“Whereas the supervisor recommended changes to the governance of the hospital to eliminate community memberships and the democratic selection and governance of the hospital board and directors based on an ideology and not on the wishes of the community;

“Whereas the supervisor has also recommended the splitting up and divestment of the mental health centre in Penetanguishene, creating uncertainty in the future of mental health beds and services; and

“Whereas hospital mergers and restructuring under the local health integration network can result in a loss in the total number of hospital beds and services provided to a community,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to

“Protect the current level of beds and services at all sites in Midland and Penetanguishene; and

“Protect the community memberships and the democratic governance of the new hospital created by the merger of HDH and PGH.”

I'll sign this.

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POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. I would join my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora who often reads this, and it goes as follows:

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day” in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign this and to ask page Kevin to carry it for me.

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

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Thursday October 23, 2008, the Minister of Tourism, Ms. Smith, rose on a point of order to express her concerns about the opposition day motion that appeared on that day's orders and notices paper and that is scheduled for debate tomorrow. The motion calls for a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the release on bail of an individual who is named in the motion. The member was of the view that the motion, which stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Runciman, violates the sub judice convention as well as the sub judice provision in our standing orders. The member for Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, also spoke to the matter, and I have also reviewed the written submission of the Leader of the Opposition.

Having had the opportunity to review the members' submissions in Thursday's Hansard, other recent Hansards, the written submission of the Leader of the Opposition, previous rulings and precedents, and the parliamentary authorities on sub judice, I am now ready to rule on the point of order.

Let me begin by reviewing the meaning of sub judice. As I indicated in an address to the House on May 8, 2008:

“Sub judice, in brief, is a voluntary restriction on the part of a legislative body to refrain from discussing matters that are before a judicial or quasi-judicial body. In other words, it is a self-imposed restriction that the Legislative Assembly places upon itself so as to avoid prejudice to a judicial case. At its core is the principle that the separation between legislative and judicial bodies is to be respected.”

As the Leader of the Opposition points out in his written submission, Ontario Speakers have generally been predisposed to giving considerable leeway to members who exercise their parliamentary responsibilities and privileges—for example, when they introduce bills, move motions, place oral questions, present petitions, table written questions and participate in debate pursuant to the standing orders. This predisposition is tantamount to a presumption, albeit a rebuttable one, that the member should not be unduly fettered in the exercise of his or her parliamentary responsibilities and privileges.

My responsibility as Speaker in the case at hand is to determine, first, whether the opposition motion offends our sub judice rule, and then whether it offends our sub judice convention, and so I shall address each issue in turn.

Though a strict interpretation of standing order 23(g) would limit the rule to “debate,” in my view this does not necessarily save a motion from its application.

A motion provides the context of the debate and is the prelude to it. A motion is not exempt from debate—quite obviously—so it must be subject to the rules of debate. I am therefore satisfied that the motion is not exempt from being looked at by me in the light of the standing order. Nevertheless, even if I were to accept an argument to the

contrary, this is moot because I still must turn to whether the motion offends the sub judice convention.

I begin by noting that, in other jurisdictions, the convention does apply to motions. For example, Marleau and Monpetit's House of Commons Procedure and Practice states as follows at page 534:

"During debate, restrictions are placed on the freedom of members of Parliament to make reference to matters awaiting judicial decisions in the interests of justice and fair play. Such matters are also barred from being the subject of motions or questions in the House."

In a similar vein, the UK House of Commons has a sub judice rule that codifies its convention. According to page 437 of the 23rd edition of Erskine May, it applies to "any motion, debate or question."

In addition, the Australian House of Representatives Practice states the following at page 505 of the fifth edition:

"Notwithstanding its fundamental right and duty to consider any matter if it is thought to be in the public interest, the House imposes a restriction on itself in the case of matters awaiting or under adjudication in a court of law. This is known as the sub judice convention. The convention is that, subject to the right of the House to legislate on any matter, matters awaiting adjudication in a court of law should not be brought forward in debate, motions or questions."

The application of the convention to motions has been specifically accepted in Ontario by virtue of a ruling that can be found at page 305 of the Journals for June 21, 2006. I too accept the view that motions are subject to our sub judice convention.

In so doing, I am cognizant of what happened on May 14, 2001, a day when there was a debate on an opposition day motion seeking a commission of inquiry into the 1995 shooting death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park. No point of order was raised on the orderliness of that motion, but it is noteworthy that while there was an ongoing civil proceeding at the time of the debate, related criminal proceedings had been fully disposed of. Parliamentary authorities are in agreement that the sub judice rule and convention are more relevant to criminal proceedings than to civil proceedings because there is more potential for prejudice to the former compared to the latter. Moreover, the motion was worded in a general way; it simply called for an inquiry into the incident.

In his written submission, the Leader of the Opposition also referred to an opposition day motion that was debated on November 28, 2006. This motion called on the government to make certain changes to the justice system, including the bail system. Like the Ipperwash motion, it did not identify the name of any individual who might be involved in an ongoing court proceeding.

In the case at hand, I appreciate the efforts of the member for Whitby-Oshawa to create a workaround on the issue before me. The member suggests that the debate on the motion could focus on general application of the rules regarding the apprehension of persons charged with

serious criminal offences, instead of on the specifics of any case before the courts.

The difficulty that I have with this approach is that it cannot be reconciled with the motion. This motion not only does not address the general application of such rules, but it also identifies, in every one of its clauses, the names of individuals associated with a very serious incident that is still before the criminal courts. It also draws conclusions on certain evidence and on the actions of officials involved in the administration of criminal justice in Ontario. Absent these specifics and written a very different way, it is likely such a motion could have proceeded, as was the case with the opposition day motion about the justice system in Ontario that was put forward in November 2006.

However, we are dealing with the motion as it is written. So for the reasons I already cited, I am satisfied that the presumption against the application of the convention has been rebutted. I find that the motion offends the sub judice convention in that it offers much potential for prejudice to an ongoing criminal proceeding, and so I am ordering that the motion be removed from the Orders and Notices paper.

In his written submission, the Leader of the Opposition made remarks about the placement of oral questions in past question periods, including the placement of questions in recent question periods on the same matter as that mentioned in the opposition day motion. As I have indicated, oral questions are approached differently than motions. However, I do have concerns about recent questions that address the same matter as the opposition day motion. I note that the Attorney General in every instance declined to address the substantive question on the basis that the matters being raised were still before the courts. The Attorney General's approach was consistent with the pre-existing practice. In a ruling at page 305 of the Journals for June 21, 2006, the Speaker addressed this very issue in the following terms:

"The voluntary nature of the sub judice convention means that every member must be careful to refrain from making comments in debate, motions or questions.

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"In debate, this self-regulation is essential. In oral question period, Speakers largely rely upon the ministers to whom questions are addressed to decide if further discussion of the matter might prejudice a matter before a court, or other judicial or quasi-judicial body, or tribunal. And while ministers have every right to decline to answer a question which in their view rubs up against the sub judice convention, members in framing questions must also be cognizant of their responsibility in this regard.

"Indeed, the very posing of a question may cross the sub judice line, but the conundrum for all is that, regardless of the subsequent actions of the Speaker or anyone else, the damage may already have been done....

"[T]he sub judice convention relies for its effectiveness upon the goodwill of all members in voluntarily refraining from discussing matters before courts or judicial bodies. I think it is worth reminding members

that extreme caution should always be the order of the day whenever such matters arise as a topic of discussion in this chamber.”

I also want to quote from paragraph 192 of the 1999 First Report of the UK Parliament’s Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege, as follows:

“It is important that a debate, a committee hearing, or any other parliamentary proceeding should not prejudice a fair trial, especially a criminal trial. But it is not only a question of prejudicing a fair trial. Parliament is in a particularly authoritative position and its proceedings attract much publicity. The proper relationship between Parliament and the courts requires that the courts should be left to get on with their work. No matter how great the pressure at times from interest groups or constituents, Parliament should not permit itself to appear as an alternative forum for canvassing the rights and wrongs of issues being considered by the judicial arm of the state on evidence yet to be presented and tested. Although the risk of actual prejudice is greater in a jury trial, it would not be right to remove appeal cases or other cases tried without a jury from the operation of the rule. Restrictions on media comment are limited to not prejudicing the trial, but Parliament needs to be especially careful: It is important constitutionally, and essential for public confidence, that the judiciary should be seen to be independent of political pressures. Thus, restrictions on parliamentary debate should sometimes exceed those on media comment.”

I hope that these statements offer members some helpful guidance when they exercise their parliamentary responsibilities and privileges in the future.

Before concluding, I want to address the timing of this point of order last Thursday. I think it would have been preferable and helpful to the Speaker if the point had been raised when the Leader of the Opposition, in whose name the motion stands, was in the chamber, so that he could have listened and responded to that point of order. Members will know that a point of order does not require notice and that the Speaker cannot direct that such a courtesy be extended. Moreover, notice is not often feasible, since a point of order has to be raised at the earliest opportunity, regardless of whether or not a member affected by it is in the House. Nevertheless, I am left with a lingering unease. I think there was room for greater consideration in this case, especially since opposition day motions are such an important means by which the opposition holds the government of the day to account.

I thank the Minister of Tourism and the member from Whitby–Oshawa for speaking to the matter last Thursday and the Leader of the Opposition for his written submission. Again, I hope that this ruling offers all members some guidance on sub judice issues.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We respect your findings and certainly will not take issue with them. But in anticipation of that possible finding on your part, we did draft an alternative with no reference to specific cases, worded in a very general way which essentially is calling for a public inquiry into Ontario’s bail system. I would

ask for unanimous consent that we can file that and use this revised motion for discussion and debate in the allocated time period tomorrow afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Attorney General on the same point of order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I haven’t seen the motion and I’m wondering if we could address this in terms of unanimous consent later in the day when I’ve had an opportunity to take a look at it and consult with the House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland on the same point of order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I should indicate that I have had the opportunity to see it, and not for any particular reason other than the fact that I have. It’s the view of the NDP that the proposed motion defers to the Speaker’s ruling in every respect, and I want to indicate that New Democrats will be prepared to give our unanimous consent to its replacing the current motion on the order paper.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: If I could just have the opportunity to have a look at it and consult with the House leader, I would be most appreciative. Apparently, there’s a House leaders’ meeting today at 2 p.m., I’m told, so maybe if we could address this shortly after that. And if I could just ask the Speaker: I don’t know the appropriate procedure, but maybe after that there’s an opportunity to call for unanimous consent again after the House leaders have had the opportunity to have a discussion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would appreciate the House leaders looking at this issue at the earliest opportunity, and if that opportunity presents itself this afternoon, I’m sure the Speaker will allow for that notice of motion. But I do need to qualify that, notwithstanding any unanimous consent that may be given, the motion will certainly still be reviewed by the Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L’AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS (NO 2)

Mr. Bentley, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, to amend the Ottawa Congress Centre Act and to enact the Ontario Capital Growth Corporation Act, 2008 / Projet de loi 114, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l’affectation anticipée de crédits et d’autres questions, modifiant la Loi sur le Centre des congrès d’Ottawa et édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la Société ontarienne de financement de la croissance.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I am in the delightful position of indicating to the Speaker that I am going to share virtually all of my time with the member from Ottawa Centre. In fact, I'm anxious to hear what he has to say.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thanks for the vote of confidence from the Attorney General and from the honourable member from Nepean–Carleton. I'm looking forward to what I say as well in the next 20 or 25 minutes.

I'm pleased to rise today and speak about Bill 114, the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2008. On March 25, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan rose to present the McGuinty government's fifth provincial budget. Through measures in the 2008 Ontario budget, we continue to implement our government's economic plan with a broad approach to stimulate investment and address the economic challenges faced by our province today. It was the first budget of the McGuinty government's second mandate.

The 2008 budget continued our strategic investments in Ontario's greatest strength, its people. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested in programs and services to help Ontario's people and families reach their full potential: publicly funded education, universal health care, modern infrastructure, support for vulnerable citizens and a greener Ontario.

Just talking about my own community in Ottawa, we have seen tremendous growth and investment in that great city of ours. Over half a billion dollars has been invested in our health care sector in Ottawa, with expansion taking place virtually at every single hospital that lies within that city boundary. Montfort, CHEO, the Ottawa Hospital—both the general and the civic campus—and the Queensway Carleton Hospital have seen the major investment and expansion that is taking place.

In post-secondary education—I have alluded to many times in this chamber that Carleton University is in my riding of Ottawa Centre, and the University of Ottawa is next door in Ottawa–Vanier—there has been a 20% increase in the operating budget for post-secondary education in Ottawa. Besides the two universities, we've got La Cité collégiale and Algonquin College as well in the city of Ottawa.

In our elementary and secondary education, we've seen a 20% per pupil increase in investment in our school boards. These have been tremendous investments since 2000, since the McGuinty government took office, in the city of Ottawa.

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The McGuinty government has been able to support these priorities in Ottawa and across the province to help people and families because of its disciplined and prudent fiscal management and because of our five-point economic plan. This comprehensive and balanced plan continues to respond to the needs of individuals, families

and businesses by investing in skills and knowledge, including enhancements to the Second Career strategy; investing in infrastructure, including \$1.1 billion to municipalities this year alone through the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008; and through strategic tax cuts for business to encourage investment, including retroactively eliminating the capital tax for manufacturing- and resource-based sectors, resulting in a \$190-million rebate right at the time when these companies need it the most; strengthening the environment for innovation, including proposing a 10-year tax break for new businesses that commercialize Canadian research through the Ideas for the Future Act; and lastly, forming key partnerships at home and internationally.

We have worked hard to build partnerships with key sectors of the economy—aboriginal peoples, municipalities and others—to encourage growth, and we will continue to press the federal government for fairness. Our five-point economic plan is working. Since the McGuinty government took office in 2003, the Ontario economy has grown in a number of areas. In spite of challenges in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, we have half a million net new jobs, and real wages continue to rise. Unemployment is lower than it was in 2003, while the labour force has grown. We made these gains despite rising oil prices, a weak US dollar and a slowing US economy. The McGuinty government's five-point economic plan has helped prepare Ontario to weather the current economic uncertainty.

The world's reality has changed dramatically in the last few weeks, and so has Ontario's. The slowing US economy and global financial situation are causing significant uncertainty. On a daily basis, we're seeing our markets and economies changing. The five-point economic plan will continue to guide us while we respond to the rapidly changing world economy.

Our government will do everything it can to protect the gains made by Ontario while taking a balanced, comprehensive approach to future growth. In his fall economic statement, Minister Duncan outlined some of the challenges facing Ontario's economy. We know that certain sectors, some communities and too many families are struggling. The 2008 budget acknowledges and addresses these sectors, these communities and these families. On October 22 we introduced Bill 114, the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2008. If passed, this new legislation would help seniors, families and businesses weather these challenging economic times.

Let me talk about taking care of our families. Ontario families are concerned about their investments, their pensions, their mortgages and their savings. Some are experiencing job losses, particularly in the manufacturing and forestry sectors. Ontarians are concerned about how they will be able to afford care for elderly parents and relatives while balancing full-time jobs and taking care of their own children. To help families cope with these very real challenges, the McGuinty government is proposing to initiate a new property tax exemption for temporary

residential dwellings that are built on the same parcel of land as an existing house to accommodate a senior family member. These are known as granny flats. By being able to build a granny flat, elderly relatives can remain close to their families, while the associated tax exemption will put more money in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians.

Taking care of Ontario's families has been a priority for the McGuinty government for the last five years, and we continue to make it a priority through unprecedented investments in health care, education, infrastructure and skills training, which create jobs now and improves productivity in the longer term.

Many Ontario seniors are concerned that recent market turbulence will put their pensions and retirement savings at risk. Financial markets are volatile, as the last few weeks have demonstrated. Pension funds, RRSPs and retirement income vehicles have all been affected. Markets, however, have historically recovered and pension funds are long-term investments. It is important to remind ourselves that pension entitlements are usually paid out over many years and retirement savings come from a combination of pension income, accumulated savings and investment returns.

Ontario property and sales tax credits provide property and sales tax assistance to seniors with modest incomes. Since 2003, our government has made several improvements to these credits to ensure that they better reflect the circumstances facing our seniors.

We would like to take that one step further by proposing an amendment to the Income Tax Act which would increase the 2008 Ontario property and sales tax credit threshold for senior couples to \$24,300 from \$23,820 in 2007. This change will benefit senior couples who rely on the guaranteed minimum income from federal and provincial programs.

About 76,000 Ontarians reside in long-term-care homes. As part of Bill 114, we are also proposing an amendment to the Assessment Act that would implement our 2008 budget commitment to preserve the historic tax exemption for long-term-care homes established under the Charitable Institutions Act. This would maintain the quality of care provided to seniors residing in these homes and support increases in the long-term-care capacity.

Let me take some time to talk about the initiatives we have taken and continue to take to lower business costs. Our government knows that businesses want choice, less red tape and improved efficiency in the services they get from government. To this end, as I have said, we developed the five-point economic plan to encourage long-term sustainable economic development. Training and education enable people to get the highly skilled jobs that will improve Ontario's productivity. The plan has seen unprecedented investments made in post-secondary education, innovation and infrastructure.

Our five-point economic plan is working. We have taken steps to reduce the administrative burden on businesses. This summer, we launched ONT-TAXS, On-

tario's tax service to reduce the administrative burden on businesses. Our first step was establishing a single toll-free number for tax administration help and information.

This past June, we replaced 39 ministry telephone numbers with one toll-free number, and businesses will soon have 24/7 access to taxation information and services online, including account inquiry, tax filing, tax payment, and change of information. These new systems will make it easier for businesses to get the information they need when they need it.

Our government also introduced one common business number as Ontario has joined the federal government and other provinces in using the federal business number to securely identify a business and its associated tax program.

We have also cut costs and improved efficiency for Ontario's businesses by harmonizing federal and Ontario corporate income tax administration. This will save businesses up to \$190 million a year in administrative costs and corporate income tax savings. Streamlining the tax system through a single combined federal and Ontario corporate income tax return means one tax form, one tax collector and one set of income tax rules for 2009 and subsequent tax years. This means that corporate taxpayers in Ontario will see a 50% reduction in the number of notices of assessment and corporate tax audits now that the CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency, will be performing these functions on behalf of Ontario; a 20% reduction in the total number of papers of their tax return; a 28% reduction in the number of fields that need to be entered on their tax return; and a 50% reduction in filing requirements for objections as a result of the standardization of federal and provincial appeals procedures. This translates into a lot less paperwork, leaving business owners and managers more time to run their businesses.

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For several years now, we have been partnering with key sectors of the Ontario economy and other jurisdictions to encourage economic growth. We made it clear we were ready to work with Ontario businesses to partner with those that wanted to grow by investing in their workers and new technologies. Since then, through support from Ontario, the auto industry has announced nearly \$7.5 billion in new investments right here in Ontario.

To encourage an innovative economy, we need to attract and keep the best and brightest. Earlier this year, we launched the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion strategy to help innovative companies keep pace with changes in the global economy and secure new knowledge-based jobs and investments in Ontario. We also appointed a new Minister of International Trade and Investment who will work exclusively on promoting Ontario to the world and attracting new investment and trade opportunities.

The McGuinty government is also very aware of the impact that taxes have on Ontario businesses, and we knew lowering business costs would help businesses succeed and create more jobs. That is why, since 2004, we have cut business taxes by more than \$1.5 billion. Fully

phased in, our tax cuts will save Ontario businesses nearly \$3 billion annually.

Small businesses are the economic backbone of Ontario's communities, accounting for approximately 40% of employment in the province. Retroactive to January 1, 2007, we have increased the small business deduction threshold by \$100,000, to \$500,000, up from \$400,000. This initiative will provide thousands of small businesses across the province with about \$100 million of tax relief over a four-year period. More than 20% of this tax relief will go to small businesses in the resource and manufacturing sectors. We are also paralleling the capital cost allowance measures announced in the 2007 and 2008 federal budgets that benefit manufacturing and support clean energy generation.

We have a competitive corporate tax system in Ontario. Our combined general and manufacturing corporate income tax rates are almost seven percentage points lower than those of our main trading partners, the American Great Lakes states. We have already taken measures to help protect existing jobs, stimulate investment in new jobs, and provide immediate cash flow to those industries most in need of working capital.

We have also legislated a plan to eliminate capital tax on July 1, 2010, 18 months earlier than scheduled in the 2004 budget. We are also cutting high business education tax rates by \$540 million over seven years. This is expected to benefit more than half a million businesses in 321 municipalities across this great province of ours.

All of those tax relief measures are intended to encourage job creation and economic growth, and they support the Ontario government's action plan for the economy.

In the 2008 budget, we announced \$750 million of tax reductions for business, primarily benefiting the manufacturing and resource sectors, over four years starting in 2007-08. We all know Ontario is a province rich in natural resources, but a weaker US dollar and a troubled global economy have put stress on Ontario's resource companies, which employ thousands of workers across the province. Bill 114 takes further action to reduce the pressure on our resource industries by extending the property tax exemption for minerals to include limestone, gravel and other mineral aggregates, so that all mineral substances will receive consistent property tax treatment. This is in addition to the \$1.1 billion of business tax relief over three years announced in the 2007 fall economic statement, which supports manufacturers and other sectors in the province challenged by current economic conditions.

I would like to take some time to talk about the innovation strategy here in Ontario. Innovation creates jobs. In addition to historic investments in attracting new high-technology jobs to our economy, we have provided tax incentives to commercialize Canadian ideas so that homegrown ideas turn into hometown jobs. The Ontario innovation tax credit is a 10% refundable tax credit available to small and medium-sized corporations that carry on scientific research and experimental develop-

ment in Ontario. Bill 114 proposes to increase the tax credit expenditure limit to \$3 million from \$2 million of qualifying expenditures. The McGuinty government also proposes to extend the taxable income phase-out range of between \$400,000 and \$600,000 under the credit to a new upper limit of \$700,000 of taxable income. This amendment to the tax credit would extend the credit to more small and medium-sized businesses and expand it to a greater amount of R&D expenditures. This proposed extension would be implemented by paralleling enhancements to the federal scientific research and experimental development tax credit proposed in the 2008 federal budget.

The McGuinty government is working to level the playing field for those who follow the rules and impose penalties for those who don't. Unpaid taxes, premiums and other fees mean less money for health care, education and other important services that help all Ontarians. In addition to our focus on service improvement to support voluntary compliance, the McGuinty government is also looking to strengthen enforcement and, in particular, to tackle the underground economy in Ontario.

One of the areas of the underground economy where we are very active is the enforcement of Ontario's tobacco tax legislation to help minimize contraband tobacco. Our government continues to work with our federal and provincial counterparts to explore new and innovative measures to address contraband tobacco. We continue to review opportunities in our own legislation to enhance our enforcement measures to encourage tobacco tax compliance. Bill 114 includes amendments that would strengthen the tobacco tax enforcement provisions, including implementing the 2008 budget announcement to regulate the purchase and use of cigarette-making machinery, adding more provisions that would allow the seizure of contraband tobacco products, and adding minimum penalties. The province will continue to consult with key stakeholders on additional mechanisms to improve compliance and administration. Enforcing tobacco tax laws also complements our smoke-free Ontario strategy.

In the 2008 budget, our government vowed to improve administrative effectiveness and enforcement, and maintain the integrity and equity of Ontario's tax and revenue collection system. We also pledged to enhance legislative clarity and regulatory flexibility to preserve policy intent. That is why we are proposing amendments to the Fuel Tax Act that clarify that the use of coloured fuel is prohibited for recreational vehicles, authorize the use of coloured fuels for railways to conform to the practice used in neighbouring jurisdictions, and provide authority for including fuel acquisition permits on the ministry's Internet listings.

As our government has stated before, we are willing to work with other jurisdictions in Canada toward the establishment of a common securities regulator.

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While a single regulator would provide the best opportunity for Canada to improve its competitiveness and

respond effectively to the ongoing turmoil in the global capital markets, none currently exists. This remains a priority for our government.

In the meantime, Bill 114 proposes to amend the Securities Act to facilitate interprovincial enforcement of securities laws. This amendment would permit the Ontario Securities Commission to impose sanctions where it determines this is in the public interest, based on a conviction, sanction or settlement for a securities law violation in another jurisdiction.

Let me take some time to talk about our partnership with the federal government and how we can work together to ensure that Ontario continues to prosper.

We continue to move aggressively to obtain fairness for Ontarians in Canada. If we were treated fairly by Ottawa, we could keep more of our hard-earned taxpayer dollars in Ontario. I should be careful. When I say "Ottawa," I mean the federal government, not my great city of Ottawa. We could move faster and further with our five-point economic plan to strengthen the economy. In particular, we could better support Ontarians who are losing their jobs. The federal government has to work with us to help manufacturers by supporting business investment and economic development right here in Ontario.

We believe it is vital that the federal government make changes to the employment insurance system to provide Ontarians with needed employment supports. The EI system is particularly ineffective in serving the needs of workers in the manufacturing sector, which is faced with a weaker US dollar, a slowdown in the US economy, high energy prices and the impact of globalization.

We have made tremendous progress, but there's much more to do. We will keep investing in innovation, in the skills and education of our workers, in infrastructure, in lowering business costs and in developing our partnerships.

The McGuinty government's 2008 budget undertakes initiatives for those sectors, communities and families facing external challenges. And if changing circumstances demand it, we will change our plan, to make it stronger. Our budget is about making sure people have jobs and Ontario's economy grows. It is about ensuring that all Ontarians have the opportunities and the skills to succeed so that together we can grow a stronger Ontario.

I now ask the honourable members for their support for Bill 114 so that we can move forward with our plan, invest in Ontarians, create jobs, and improve competitiveness for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to enter debate today. I do not envy the task the member from Ottawa Centre had today. It's unusual that the finance minister would forgo the opportunity to speak to an economic statement. Having said that, these are unusual times, and I can understand why the finance minister would not want to speak to this after he brought in a deficit of at least \$500 million.

Over the weekend, I had an opportunity to read an article written by Randall Denley in our great city's newspaper, the Ottawa Citizen. "Duncan would have you believe that the provincial deficit is the result of economic events of the last few weeks. That's simply untrue. Ontario's economy has been atrophying for two years, but the government continued to spend without an eye to the future," says Randall Denley. He goes on to say, about your five-point plan: "The five-point plan, in reality, consists only of old-fashioned infrastructure spending, minor business tax cuts, a skills retraining plan that has been a" flip "flop and a lot of talk. What Duncan and McGuinty have been doing isn't working, and yet they just keep doing it."

We in the Conservative Party have been challenging the Liberals for the past two years to take the economy seriously. We've outlined for them what I think are four solid next steps. One is to meet with the opposition leaders to talk about a pragmatic and practical solution to our economy, not a political one. We've told them and urged them to restrain their spending with our bureaucracy. We've asked them to lessen regulations, and we've asked them to reduce taxes. They've done none of the above. Instead, they've come out with their five-point plan which, as Mr. Denley points out, is all wrong.

It is a shame that the finance minister chose not to lead off this debate. Had he been proud of what he had done and accomplished last week, I'm sure—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to thank the member for his submission. It was well thought out. Unfortunately, it doesn't deal with the issues. I'm really surprised that the member—and not just him but other members of this House from the government—keeps saying that they want to work with other levels of government; they want to work with the opposition. Well, that's not quite true. We have submitted bills that have all been shot down by the government. Every bill we've submitted to the committee level has gone down in flames. Every time we make suggestions, they don't listen. If we do have good suggestions and we bring them to committee level, they want to either steal the idea or not even deal with it. In fact, I brought a bill forward, Bill 6, which they didn't even give me the courtesy to read. So when they say these things, it sounds like they want to do it and it sounds like they want to work with us, but that's not the case. It's their way or the highway.

There are things to be done provincially, which we've stated: for instance, our 10% manufacturing tax credit, "Buy Ontario," all the things we've brought forward, but because it's not their idea, they don't want to deal with it. They want to come up with some kind of subdeal or something else under their wording to make it look like it's their idea.

When I came to this Parliament, and it hasn't been that long, I was told that maybe we could work together for the people of Ontario; maybe we would work as a team to better the lives of Ontarians. That's not the case. It's

very partisan, and any good ideas that fall short of the table don't even get dealt with. It's very unfortunate and very disillusioning to me.

Finally, they are constantly blaming the feds. They're constantly blaming the Conservative government. There are things that we can do here provincially. Yes, we could use some more money from Ottawa—there's no doubt about it and I won't deny that. But there are things we could do, and they are not being dealt with.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I know in my communities of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, people watch what's happening in the United States, and they look at the meltdown of other foreign banking systems. They have asked me, even up to some of the events I was at this weekend, "What is this going to mean to us here in our community? Is it going to mean, for example, that Credit Valley Hospital's phase 2 project is either going to be delayed or cancelled?" The answer is no. "Does it mean that our much-needed improvements on the GO system and our fix-up at Meadowvale, Lisgar and Streetsville are going to be delayed or cancelled?" The answer is no. "Is it going to affect the phase-out of the hated GTA pooling?" The answer is no.

This is a bill that's responsible and that responds to the challenge of the times. One of the things that it does is to focus on innovation. In the private sector, successful companies make specific commitments to generate revenue from products and services they do not now offer. So too does Ontario. We can see in this particular bill the Ontario innovation tax credit, which is a refundable tax credit available to small and medium-sized corporations to reward them for doing things that they don't do now, for generating jobs that don't exist now and for being able to provide opportunity for people doing things that they aren't doing now.

This is the way to go. This is the way that progressive governments all through the world are going. And who are they copying? They're copying Ontario. We are leading on this.

Now, other parties would see us do something different. The Ontario republican party—or is that the opposition? I think it's the Ontario republican party—would see us give away nearly exactly the same \$5.5 billion that we found in a hidden deficit before the 2003 election. It doesn't make sense. We don't close hospitals and download recession costs onto the young, the old, the poor—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I want to make some comments regarding the member from Ottawa Centre's debate. He talked about Ottawa, and, quite frankly, I have to mention that I did a TV show and was asked on the TV show, "What do you think about Minister Flaherty making his comments?" I said, "What do you expect him to say? He is constantly being attacked by these individuals," as was mentioned again during the debate, that we have to blame somebody else. Well, there comes

a time to lead, and you have to lead by example and step up to the plate. If things aren't coming your way, you deal with what you have before you and you address that issue and move on. You don't blame somebody else. It's a game that parties of every stripe play, at all levels of government. Whether it's the municipalities blaming the province, which is blaming the feds, and vice versa—the whole vicious circle—the end result is that we have one taxpayer and we have to take care of that individual.

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The member spoke about better service for people losing their jobs. We have the second-time-around program, which deals with individuals losing their jobs. I think we should have somewhat more of a strategy to deal with individuals growing into new jobs. There's such a strong emphasis on certain aspects of society and developing that, where other areas, such as skilled trades—I know that there was a lack in a number of fields, that we could use some assistance in a number of areas. Some focus on that would certainly aid in that area as well.

The member spoke about being ineffective related to the economy. Well, I know that one of the ministers recently showed up in Thunder Bay and made a multi-million dollar announcement with a forestry company. We only have to look at what happened within that sector to see that. However, it should be known that that same forestry company spoke to me and said they had 10 times that amount to invest somewhere and they weren't coming to the province of Ontario—that exact same company. They were looking elsewhere. Because of the structure and everything that was happening within that sector, Ontario was not a place to invest.

We need to move forward in the best interests of all Ontarians, and working together is one of the best ways.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Ottawa Centre for a response.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to extend my gratitude to the members from Nepean–Carleton, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mississauga–Streetsville and Oshawa for their insightful comments.

Every single member of this government is very proud of the investments we, this government, have made in our communities since 2003: investments in our health care sector, investments in our education, investments in our public services, investments in our infrastructure. These investments have made sure that Ontario today is a strong province, that our infrastructure—that our health care sector and our schools are good places for our citizens, our constituents, to be.

This government is not playing any blame game. This government is only seeking fairness for Ontarians. That's not blaming; that is saying that we should be able to keep our share in order for us to prosper and grow. That's not blaming anybody. We want to create a stronger Ontario so that Canada is even stronger. This country is built on the backs of its citizens, and we, as a nation, are stronger if every single part of this country is strong. That's why we're asking the federal government to invest in Ontario,

to make sure that Ontario is treated fairly in terms of its unemployed workers—that is the employment insurance—its share for the health care sector and infrastructure. That is in no way a blame game. By blaming others, we are abrogating our responsibility, and I don't think anybody in this House is elected to do so.

I urge all the members of this Legislature to bind together to ensure that in these rough economic times, in times when we all are scratching our heads and looking outside, asking, "What is going on globally?"—all our financial institutions are just crumbling away, things we took for granted. We need to come together. We need to ensure that we, as a collective, continue to grow Ontario stronger, and the federal government is as much responsible—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Could I ask for unanimous consent to defer the lead by our critic, the MPP for Niagara West–Glanbrook? He will be here a little later on. I'd like to speak in the meantime.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Go ahead.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 114, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, to amend the Ottawa Congress Centre Act and to enact the Ontario Capital Growth Corporation Act, 2008.

I know this is going to be a very interesting debate as we work our way through it, because there's going to be a lot of discussion around deficits. I'd like to go back to the last government and to the situation that then-Premier Mike Harris found himself in at the beginning of 1995. As you know, there were close to five years of deficits accumulated by the government before that, the Bob Rae government, the guy who I think will probably try to be the leader of the federal Liberal Party. The reality is that those budgets, those numbers, totalled almost \$50 billion over those five years. They had a difficult economy; there's no question about that. Times were tough in those days, and they tried to spend their way out of it. That's a fact. That was their philosophy and those were their policies, and as a result \$50 billion is added on to the overall debt of the province.

I listened to the Premier of the day and he said, "Well, when the Conservatives were in power they had five years of deficit." That is true, but what he didn't mention—and he never does mention anything to try to explain why he said it—was that under the Common Sense Revolution and under Mr. Harris he put a plan forward that in four years, by the time 1999 rolled around, he would have slowly eliminated the deficit. That is what happened. It went down a few billion dollars a year. At the same time, and in spite of the fact that they like to say Premier Harris cut health care, the reality is he didn't. Health care spending went up every year, as it has with every government since 1983, I believe, or something

like that. It has been some time since we have not had a government that has increased health care funding.

We got to the point where we had a difficult year and a deficit had accumulated—I'm not sure of the exact amount of that deficit—in 2003. Again, only a few days after the current government, the only government—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It was \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You can heckle me all you want because I'll heckle you back.

Okay, let's say it was \$5 billion. The reality is that never once have they ever mentioned anything to do with SARS, with the blackout, with West Nile virus, with mad cow disease. Those were all factors that hit this province in 2003. They have never explained one penny of that away. They never gave the government any credit whatsoever for that. They just said we were poor managers.

Now we've got a government that's going into deficit, and what's happening? After they have increased spending and increased taxes for the citizens of Ontario by \$29 billion a year in the last five years, a 41% increase in spending, now they're going to see a deficit. They inherited a good, strong economy. Yes, we were trying to keep taxes low. That was our philosophy. But the reality is, they've wasted this money away, and now, when we have difficult times ahead of us, there's nothing there for us. There's no money set aside like the billions of dollars they could have set aside to wait for a rainy day. They've had a good, strong economy. They've wasted it, with a blow to bureaucracy; we all know that. And the reality is, we have a Premier who stood in the House, who stood at a photo op under the Taxpayer Protection Act in 2003 during the election campaign and signed the Taxpayer Protection Act pledge that said, "I will not raise your taxes." That's what he said, and "I will not have deficits." That's what he said.

Now we're seeing another broken promise. That's what this government is all about. How many promises do you continue to break? One after another, year after year, week after week, and it goes on and on. Now we've got some tough times.

What do they do as a result of that? It's never their fault. It's always someone else's fault. Let's just say it's the price of gasoline, it's the world economy and, of course, the big one is Stephen Harper. Stephen Harper has only been the Prime Minister for the last 30 months. Where were these folks before that? Where were they before, when we had years and years of our party and the New Democratic Party complaining that the federal government under the Chrétien-Martin years was not coming through with the proper funding? They would never say anything against Martin or Chrétien. It was always, "You're not spending money wisely." They would never give any credit to the fact that we were asking for the same thing that they're asking about today. What they did is they just blamed our management of the economy. But now their number one mandate as a government is to try to blame Stephen Harper for everything.

Look at the money that the federal government has actually transferred, and it's not even being used. We'll

start out with the police officers. You got \$156 million on April 1. You signed on the dotted line. I've said that to Minister Bartolucci. They signed on the dotted line that they would accept the \$156 million. And what has he done since then? He has done nothing but harp and gripe about the fact that it's not the kind of agreement they wanted. So you say to yourself, if it's not the kind of agreement you wanted, and you are the minister, why did you sign on the deal? Why did you take the money? Why didn't you decline the money? That's what I would have done if I was the minister. I'd have said that it's not a good enough deal for Ontario, but they grabbed the money, they put the money in a bank account, and now they're saying that the deal's not good enough. And what have they done? They announced a measly 300 cops. They promised 1,000 police officers underneath the 2,500 officers program from the federal government. Ontario's only going to end up with 329, apparently. Or maybe that's a step, phase one, and they can announce the other ones later.

1430

I was at the OPPA association's banquet the other night at their annual general meeting and the minister—that's all he got up and did—just yelled and screamed at Stephen Harper and Rob Nicholson from the federal government for not providing enough money. But it was he who accepted the money; it was Dalton McGuinty that accepted the \$156 million from Ottawa. They accepted the terms and the conditions of the agreement, they took the money—as I said earlier, it's in the bank account—and now they're griping about it; it's not enough money.

The same thing applies to this make-work program—whatever the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is supposed to be doing in his role, I don't really know over there. But there's \$355 million he has available, and on top of that there's another, I believe, over \$1 billion in retraining money that the federal government has sent these people and they have not used it yet; it's sitting in bank accounts. I guess they're prepared to not spend the money, and we heard today the questions coming to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. He's saying that there are thousands of people utilizing this. I don't think there is. The reality is that this money that was transferred under these make-work programs or this retraining program is really not having an impact at all.

I wanted to mention a couple of other things while I had the floor. We talked about the retraining money and new money for police officers. This is money that this government has from the federal government; they have not spent it. They're sitting back and just continuing to blast the federal government at every opportunity they get.

But I want to talk a little bit about one of the things the ministry loves to stand up and do: talk about how they've increased the number of inspectors in the WSIB. Well, we may have more inspectors, but what we don't have is consistency in how they inspect. I got a call last week from a manufacturer in Simcoe county, and I'm not

going to use the company's name because they will probably be retaliated against. But the reality is that this company manufactures cement products and has over 50 years in business. They have an outstanding record in Simcoe county. They have half-million dollar trucks on the road. They take their cement products into the United States. They have other plants across Ontario, and they've always complied with every rule. The WSIB or Ministry of Labour inspectors are in there on a continual basis inspecting the premises, and as recently as two years ago they had the whole building what they call regarded for the workers' safety.

Just recently, two weeks ago this Thursday night, a Ministry of Labour inspector went in, shut the plant down and said that it wasn't satisfactory to him. They pulled out all the records from the other inspectors, and the inspector said to them, "That was them; this is me." There is no consistency. So whatever some inspector interprets, he walks into the job and puts all these people—they had to send the shifts home and they had to work all weekend to satisfy one inspector, keeping in mind this plant had been upgraded just recently. And the owners, of course, were really unhappy with this, and they said to me, "Do you want us in Ontario? Do you want us as a member of your community creating jobs and working here?" because, you know, it doesn't sound like we do. I'm hearing that there is a blitz across the province right now, attacking these companies—I don't know whether it is all about health and safety or it's all about a bunch of inspectors being on ego trips—but the reality of the matter is that they're not inspecting on a consistent basis. That is my key message here: It's simply not consistent because they should all be inspecting the same kinds of products and the same kinds of working conditions and they should charge companies or credit companies on the positive or negative things they're doing on a consistent basis, and we're not seeing that.

So I wanted to put that on the record, because I don't know how many people here in this room are getting a lot of complaints about WSIB, but we're hearing it almost every hour now. What people are saying is that this government, Dalton McGuinty's government, is not business friendly. That's what's driving manufacturing jobs away. They don't feel welcome in the province of Ontario. I've heard that over and over again.

As recently as a couple of weeks ago, I was talking to one of the upper administrators at a plant up in Penetanguishene, and he told me that every three months he has to go to the United States and convince the owners of the company why they should keep the plants in Ontario. He's doing it because he wants to keep these jobs in Penetanguishene. There are over 500 of them. They are very important to the economy of our community and to the province of Ontario. Almost every other jurisdiction they deal with in the United States is having incentive programs to relocate those jobs out of Ontario, and over and over again, he has to find reasons why not to relocate those jobs out of our province. That, I find, is a very,

very difficult position to be in and also why I think we've got to quit playing these games that we're playing and move forward and really, as my colleague says, start working together.

I think the federal government probably could use a new arrangement with the province of Ontario. But it has to be—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Let's be fair about it. We can support some of that, but when we look back and see how the current government completely ignored the fact that there could have been any kind of discrepancy in the funding coming from the federal governments when there was a Liberal government in Ottawa for 13 years, that's a problem, because for 13 years we know that happened. I can remember sitting in this House, and I think it was Mr. Arnott who made a resolution, and Premier Harris adopted it, asking the federal government to increase the funding for health care from 13 cents to 19 cents on every dollar. The names of all three three party leaders were on the piece of paper: Michael Harris, Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton. Howard Hampton signed the sheet. Mike Harris signed the sheet. McGuinty refused to sign it. Now what does he do? He can't answer a question where he doesn't blame the federal government. That's what happens. In almost every question, in his answer to this House—and even in the comments coming from the parliamentary assistant today, half of them were blasting the federal government. They weren't trying to work with the federal government.

They should take a message. The Conservative Party of Canada holds the most seats in Ontario right now. That should have sent you a message. In my riding, they won by thousands and thousands of votes—18,000 votes in Barrie. I think it was 20,000 votes they won by in Peter Van Loan's riding. There's a movement of conservatism in this province. They should start to listen to Mr. Harper and not cut him up every time he turns around. They had a choice. They could have gone toward the green shift and Mr. Dion. Of course, you've seen how quickly they kicked Mr. Dion out of his seat. They could have gone that way, which would have meant higher taxes. The citizens of Canada decided not to go that route. They stuck with Mr. Harper. They believe he is a much better fiscal manager and that my former colleague Jim Flaherty is a much better Minister of Finance. They've just won—it is a minority government, but just barely a minority government. So people should start to listen to their concerns and work with them. I understand already that Premier Danny Williams has agreed to work in co-operation. I haven't heard anything from Mr. McGuinty, but quite frankly, I think it's a mistake for them not to go in that direction.

We have a lot of other things I'd like to speak about today. Why do we have a couple of these ministries? There's one ministry called the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship—what is it called?

Mr. Norm Miller: Small business and consumer services.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Small business and consumer services. I'm telling you, that guy never answers a question. He never answers a question on small business. I don't know if he supports small business or not. Today he answered some questions, and every time he answered a question on a particular company, he found another company that might have been doing not too bad that he had visited, but he didn't answer the question on the company that was going broke. For example—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): May I remind the member to keep the debate to the issue on the floor, which is Bill 114.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I'm trying to say here is that this bill is all about good business practices. These guys are in a deficit now, and it could go as high as \$5 billion or \$6 billion like that, and they'll spend the rest of their term having huge deficits.

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One of the things I believe very strongly is that they don't believe in growing small businesses. The parliamentary assistant talked about contraband cigarettes. You know what? We've almost completely wiped out the small convenience store operators. They have all these power walls in now. But you can go into all these First Nations smoke shops and have as many cigarettes as you want—I think they account for something like 30% of the cigarettes on the market now—and no one is doing anything about it. If it is partly a federal issue, maybe they could start working with the federal government to stop that, because I thought we were worried about health care here. That's why we passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, because we were worried about kids getting their hands on these cigarettes. They can just go out to the First Nations and buy them, and there are smoke shops everywhere in the First Nations areas.

I'm glad to see we have our Minister of Agriculture here today. I appreciated her comments last week in the estimates committee. But you know what? The reality is that the agriculture community is having a very, very difficult time. I've mentioned a number of times in this House about travelling to Quebec this summer and seeing the difference in Quebec's farmers and Ontario's farmers.

But the worst thing about it is the young farmers. There are hardly any young farmers going into farming. They see other opportunities. We just do not see them. That is a concern that we have. Any farmer in any of the agricultural societies, organizations or associations across our province will tell you that's one of their biggest fears: The young farmers are not going into the family farm anymore. It's a real concern, and there's nothing to create that incentive for them to do so.

As we move forward, there are a number of other issues I'd like to speak to today, but I'm going to make sure my colleagues have an opportunity to speak as well on it. But I go back to the fact that we have a bill here that is sort of an excuse for creating a deficit. The deficit is just a beginning. I think it's much more serious than

what they've let on. There are a lot of organizations now that have been used to getting a lot of money, but suddenly they won't get that money anymore, as they do cuts. When we were in power, it was "slash and cut." Now they're just saying it's a needed cut. That's what they keep saying they're talking about.

We have to face reality here. We are into some difficult times, but this is no time for this province to start running deficit budgets. I think if you quit having these parties at the Windsor casino for \$2 million or \$3 million and you start acting responsibly with the taxpayers' money, not spending money on these fancy brochures that are put out by the Ministry of Tourism and organizations like that, those are areas you can start to cut right now. You don't need to do that. You don't need to have that kind of literature. In fact, I would even suggest it's probably against the very law that you passed. I could bring some of them forward to show you what they look like. One was put forward this year by the Ministry of Tourism.

As we move forward, I for one will not be supporting this bill. I think this is a government that has had a lot of opportunity to prove itself, and now we should be having huge surpluses with the kinds of increases they've had and not having deficits. We're at a time period in this province where we need to be creating excitement so people will want to continue to invest here. What we've done is, we've driven this province into probably the poorest economic condition of any province in our country, and that is unacceptable. It shows you the lack of interest and basically what I call the hatred of the small business person in this community. We've seen 220,000, 230,000 manufacturing jobs leave here. You wonder how many others are following them out the door when business leaders see a government that's prepared to run deficits.

I thank you for this opportunity, Madam Speaker, to speak to Bill 114 and look forward to further comments after.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to comment on the member from Simcoe North and what he had to say. I want to say at the outset that I think that he is correct in not supporting this particular bill. He is correct in not supporting the bill, because the bill will only add to the mistakes that I believe this government is making. But I also have to rise to state that I find that his solutions are a little lacking as well, because I do not concur with the rationale that he has given for attacking the bill and for attacking this government. He is talking about deficits. I know that the government of Canada will currently be looking at the possibility of running a deficit and that people throughout the economic community who are highest placed in our banks and lending institutions are cautioning the government that it needs to get away from the strident view about deficits.

I also have to comment that I do not think his solutions in terms of cuts—he mentioned some of the cuts he

wanted to make in terms of government brochures and bureaucracy and the like—would be shared by the majority of Ontarians. We have a civil service in this province of which we should be justifiably proud. They do an amazing job. We have the lowest civil-servant-to-citizen ratio in the entire country, and I do not want to cut them further.

I have seen in the past what the solutions he has advocated have done in terms of Walkerton. I have seen what they have done in terms of a department where we have fisheries officers and others who cannot go out and maintain our environment. I have seen environment officers hamstrung in their work for this province. The answer is not further cuts. He is right to oppose the bill, but he is wrong in his solutions. I'm hoping, in the one-hour leadoff I have, to talk about some of the things this government should be doing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am happy to have the opportunity to respond to the member from Simcoe North. I listened very carefully to his remarks, and there were a couple of things I did want to make some comment about. As the minister with responsibility for agriculture in Ontario, I certainly recognize that we have a role to play to support our industry players, and we have done that. We will continue to do that. In the last five years, there has been \$1.1 billion spending in risk-management programs and ad hoc programs to support farmers. I believe that farmers in Ontario are doing an excellent job.

I was a little disappointed when I heard the comment that the member from Simcoe North was in Quebec and suggested that he noticed a real difference in the kind of farms they have there. They do farm a little bit differently there, but I would say that the farms we have in Ontario are as strong, as vibrant and as well managed as anything—he's shaking his head. I can't believe that we have a member in this Legislature who is comparing our farmers to Quebec's and suggesting that ours are not right at the very top. They absolutely are. Our farmers are implementing new technologies. In fact, I have the Minister of Agriculture from Quebec wanting to come to Ontario to meet me, to visit our farms to see what we're doing here.

I would say to the people of Ontario, with respect to the path our government is looking to pursue with this bill, if passed, that I'm satisfied that the minister is prepared to present a deficit instead of cutting programs in my ministry that support farmers and the good work they do at a time when they need it the most.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the member for Simcoe North. As always, he brought forward excellent points that focus on small business and his community. I was pleased to hear him talk so much about the concerns he is raising with the deficit and what that is going to lead to down the road.

I think we have to remember that since October 2003, the McGuinty Liberals have had more money—higher spending, higher taxes—than any other government; 40% more revenue coming in. What have they done? Have they paid down the debt? No, they haven't paid down the debt. They just did the easy thing, which was shovel it all back out again. They've increased the public sector; they've increased their program spending by 50%.

There are no heavy decisions being made by the McGuinty Liberals. There's no governing happening. We need a government that's actually going to make some tough decisions and decide which programs need to stay and which programs need to be phased out. I don't see those heavy decisions, those challenging government decisions, being made by the McGuinty Liberals. It's incredibly unfortunate, because when you don't deal with the debt, it climbs, and since the Libs have been in power, total debt in Ontario continues to climb. We're now faced with—every Ontario resident, every man, woman, child in Ontario—a \$13,000 deficit because the McGuinty Liberals won't make tough decisions and won't actually come up with solutions to decrease our debt. Their solution is, let's have a deficit again.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to respond to the honourable member from Simcoe North.

I'm sure the honourable member was listening to my speech. I spent the majority of time in my speech talking about the kind of business tax cuts we've been bringing in the province of Ontario, and the kind of reduction in red tape we've been bringing by harmonizing our corporate tax system, by increasing the capital cost allowance for our small businesses. That's the kind of investment, those are the kinds of changes this government is making to ensure that small and mid-sized businesses can get that advantage and don't spend their time filling out forms and paying higher taxes but actually spend more time running their businesses and generating wealth—what they're supposed to do. That's what our budget is working toward, is meant to do.

When the members from opposite say that somehow this government has wasted money by making investments in the public sector, what they fail to relate to us or give us is advice as to where we should be cutting. They talk about cutting in the public sector. Should we be firing nurses? Should we be getting rid of water inspectors or meat inspectors? They fail to give us advice as to where they would like to see the cuts.

We've seen that movie before. We have done that. Since 2003, this government has been working toward fixing the broken system which was led by the Conservative government of the past. What we've been doing is making sure that our hospitals are actually there to provide care; that we have more nurses; that we have more teachers in our schools, to ensure that our kids get the education they need. That's where we have made the

investment, and Ontarians really appreciate it, because that's the mandate they have given us: to invest in our hospitals, to invest in our schools, to make sure that the public has been given the kind of fundamental services they pay their taxes for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member from Simcoe North for a response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the member for Beaches–East York, the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Dufferin–Caledon and the member for Ottawa Centre for their comments on my comments.

I'd like to begin by saying that I wasn't trying to talk about making massive cuts; I was trying to say, "Spend the money efficiently." When the Ontario Lottery and Gaming commission is spending \$2.7 million on a party, I don't think that's a good use of taxpayers' money. I don't think giving a million dollars to a cricket club, when they asked for \$100,000, is a good use of taxpayers' money.

I've seen the brochure put out by the Ministry of Tourism. It was one of those glossy things, costing about \$15 to print. And you know what? I don't think we needed that at a time when tourism operators were failing drastically this year. That's the kind of thing. If you want me to go on and on, I will. The reality is, you can save money by not wasting money.

As far as the Minister of Agriculture is concerned, why I brought up the Quebec model is quite simple. I travelled through Quebec this summer, and I'm seeing new houses being built on farms, I'm seeing additions being put on barns, I'm seeing new trucks and new tractors in their fields, and I'm not seeing that in Ontario. I'm seeing dairy farm operations closing down—and those are our profitable ones. There are only two hog operations, Madam Minister, left in the county of Simcoe. There used to be 75 or 80, minimum, at any given time. That's what's happening to agriculture. There are no young people going into the business. They want out of there. They want out of it, because they're not happy with this government.

I've said before, and I'll say it again, I think this government has a hatred for entrepreneurs and business operators and farmers. We see it day in and day out. People aren't—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Excuse me. Can I just ask the member not to ascribe motives to other members of the House. It's against the standing orders. Thank you.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay. I believe this government is anti-business all the way. There's no incentive for them to create jobs here. People are not happy in the manufacturing industry in the province of Ontario under this government.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Pursuant to the House leaders' meeting earlier this afternoon, and based on the findings of the Speaker earlier today, I'm seeking unanimous consent to move, without notice, a replacement motion for the official opposition's scheduled opposition day of Tuesday, October 28.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Leeds–Grenville has asked for unanimous consent to put a replacement motion forward in replacement of the motion from today. Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I move that, whereas the alarming number of murders—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): To the member for Leeds–Grenville, the motion just needs to be filed by 5 o'clock today, I believe, and that will take care of the matter. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to rise and talk about this bill, a bill about which I'm sure people watching on television will wonder, "What is this all about?" Every year, we come and talk about the interim appropriations bill, and everybody wonders what that is all about, and the budget measures and everything that's contained within it.

Just for a little edification here, this is a bill that contains so many provisions—I believe that in total there are 23 different acts and bills that are amended by it. It's how the government intends to spend money. It's an opportunity for them to add changes to bills in order to bring them more in line with government thinking. But most telling, it is a bill that allows the government the authority to spend money. It allows them not only to spend money from the fall economic statement, but it allows them quite clearly to spend money in ways that we cannot even imagine for the next two years.

Just for greater clarification, I'd like to quote what I think is the important section of the bill, which is hidden way down in schedule J. It reads as follows: "The schedule enacts the Interim Appropriation for 2009-2010 Act, 2008 which authorizes expenditures for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2010 up to specified maximum amounts. The expenditures authorized under the act are to be applied in accordance with the votes and items set out in the estimates and supplementary estimates for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2010 that are tabled in the assembly."

So what the government is asking for this Legislature to do today in the debate of this bill is to authorize their entire finances, not just from the fall economic statement, but in fact through the budget in 2009, through the fall statement which I guess we can expect next year in 2009, sometime around this time of the year, and right up to and including—or up to but not including—the budget in the year 2010.

You can understand why the opposition is a little reluctant at this time to grant this interim appropriation, and you can understand our reluctance based on what has happened economically and based on what we perceive is happening in the economy in general in this province and around the world. You would have to understand and pardon me if I don't agree to vote for this. You would have to pardon me and understand when I would understand why every single opposition member would be reluctant. And you would have to question, I think, and people out there in the audience watching this would

have to question, why backbench Liberals are so willing to stand on their feet and talk in glowing terms about this and give what will amount to *carte blanche* for this government to spend whatever they want—whatever, literally, they want, and whatever they put before this House—for not only the year 2008, but all of 2009 and for the period ending March 31, 2010.

To do so, one would have to be satisfied with the way the government is currently handling the economy and the state of affairs of this province. I would have to state categorically at the outset that I have not been satisfied. I have not been satisfied when the finance minister stood in his place in this Legislature last year at the time of the budget and said that we were going to have a surplus of some \$3 or \$4 billion. I'm not satisfied when that same finance minister only a month or two ago stood in his place in this Legislature and announced that there was still going to be a surplus and that times were humming along quite nicely, thank you very much. And I am not satisfied when the minister stood up last week and told us that we were going to be running a deficit.

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I'm not totally opposed to deficits, and I will speak to that in a little bit, because I do believe that the deficit is small. But what is troubling to me and I think to Ontarians is that the biggest deficit so far has been that of the credibility of the finance minister, who can go from some billions of dollars that we are going to have in reserve to, "The economy is fine and just trust me," to "Hello; we are now in a deficit situation"—the same finance minister, I might also state, who, when scrummed outside in the press gallery and on television over the last few days, has not wanted to venture even one iota of an opinion on what will happen to the budget of this province in the next year, never mind what he may or may not be saying in March 2009 when the new budget comes forward.

The reality I understand as well, because, in voting against this budget measure and other budget measures, I and all of the opposition members and all of my colleagues in the NDP, whenever we ask a tough question, are going to be berated by government members, particularly the Minister of Finance and the Premier, that we didn't vote for their budget bill. That's what happens almost every day. I watched it again in amazement today. A simple question was asked about tax policy as it related to municipalities and property taxes. Of course, we were waiting, and of course, out came the answer that the opposition had not voted for last year's budget bill, which contained a very small provision that some people who are on fixed incomes—not all people, but some people—might be eligible for a \$250 tax gift if their assessment went up.

It's very difficult to vote for a budget which contains \$90 billion and to say what portions you agree with and what portions you don't. But I am sure that when we vote against this bill, which contains 26 acts, no matter what time we stand up and ask a simple question, whether it be under the Tobacco Tax Act or any of the others that are

contained in here, a member of the government will stand up and say, "You opposed this piece of legislation."

The reality is, we don't have a choice. The government is always and singularly unwilling to separate out those things which the opposition will agree to and will always include those things which we don't. I heard the current Minister of Transportation describe it once, five or six years ago, when I was still fairly new in this House. He called it the poison pill; that every government, including his own, included a poison pill provision that the opposition could not agree with so that, from that point on, when the opposition voted no, they could bring up all the positive aspects of the bill any time a question was asked, any time they did not have an answer, to point out how the opposition had voted against it.

In voting against this bill, because I am not willing to give the government *carte blanche* for the next two years, I realize full well that what is going to happen is, they are going to stand up from time to time and remind me that I would not give them that *carte blanche*. But they're not going to phrase it like that; they're going to phrase it in terms of the Tobacco Tax Act or any of the others that are contained within the body of this bill, and they're going to contain it almost every single time that a budget or any budgetary matter is brought forward.

If we were to vote for this bill, we would be voting for and we would be supporting a government that has made absolutely failing efforts in many key aspects of the economy and the infrastructure of this province. We would be supporting a government that has allowed 230,000 manufacturing jobs to flee this province in the last five years under their mandate. We would be supporting a government that has allowed the economy to decline at a very rapid rate. We would be supporting a government where we have gone quite clearly and unequivocally from a budget surplus a few months ago to a budget deficit today. We would be supporting a government that sets up a retraining program—and a much-vaunted one—where they patted each other on the back continuously for days and weeks, talking about how they were going to do long-term retraining, only to find out that only about 1,000 Ontarians have availed themselves of the plan and its dismal failure. We would be supporting a government that refuses to talk about poverty, that just held its fall financial statement, where the finance minister and the Premier on their feet did not even mouth the word "poverty" once; didn't even talk about one of the most pressing issues facing unemployed and under-employed Ontarians today.

We would be supporting a government that agrees with and continues to contract out services in hospitals and other places, looking at two-tier options, looking at more expensive options in terms of hospitals and schools.

We would be supporting a government that is not supporting our municipalities, a government that has time after time after time delayed the announcement that they promised in terms of municipalities, in terms of the cities and towns of the province of Ontario, which were supposed to be getting some kind of relief in terms of the

download and were supposed to have some kind of a plan on the table.

Most recently, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stood in his place and said that it's taking more time than he thought and promised an answer by the end of this week. Quite frankly, if the answer was coming by the end of this week, I would have expected it by now, and I expect that some time around Thursday or so he won't announce that in the House. He will quietly let it slip by until the first media scrum, whence he will announce that it's somewhere on the horizon before the end of the year—the same horizon, of course, that the government now invents for its much-vaunted poverty plan.

The government will also say—and I'm ready for the barbs—that we did not support their five-point plan. But again, how can you support a five-point plan that has failed so abysmally? How can you support a five-point plan that has failed in economic good times when we are now in economic bad times? That is what is being asked here today, and I will not be supporting this Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act for those reasons.

I'd like to just go on and talk about what the government has done and why I do not give them the *carte blanche* set out in schedule J to literally spend any amounts of money they wish between now and March 31 of the year 2010.

This government has, over the past five years, stood on the sidelines while 230,000 manufacturing workers lost good jobs. They have stood on the sidelines while 40,000 direct and indirect forestry jobs have been lost in Ontario, where sawmills, pulp mills and paper mills literally across the whole length and breadth of northern Ontario and some of the ancillary jobs in southern Ontario have been completely gone. I hope some day we may get them back, but I despair in terms of the workers who have lost their jobs in those far northern communities, and I despair in terms of the manufacturing jobs, which seem every day to be fleeing our province for other climes.

Today in this Legislature, we did not hear the answer from a minister when asked why this government chose to buy Mexican-made sweaters for the RCMP that could and should have been made in Ontario. That's the kind of question that Ontarians need to ask: whether this government is, in fact, looking at the positive economic potential of this province and is doing everything necessary to protect the workers and the people who live here.

The economic storm clouds are here. The Minister of Finance, despite years of saying the economy was fundamentally strong, is finally admitting that the workers have lost their jobs in manufacturing and the resource heartlands. With every new statistic that is reported comes more bad news about job prospects in Ontario, and it's not just, unfortunately, the manufacturing and forestry sectors, but it's now starting to hit just about everyone.

The Liberals' answer to this has been woefully and totally inadequate. A couple of weeks ago, Premier Mc-

Guinty presented a resolution in this House—and I don't believe it has passed yet. I don't believe so. We haven't voted on it yet. I don't think so. He presented a resolution arguing that his so-called five-point plan was sufficient to guide Ontario through an economic downturn.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No. I just wanted to make sure I hadn't missed it, because it was such a monumental and momentous debate. He suggested that the same five-point plan that has failed so much in the past in protecting the 230,000 manufacturing jobs and the resource sector is now adequate to support what is left here in Ontario.

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Ontarians, I believe, are looking for a real economic plan. They're looking for something. They're looking for a government that will be activist, a government that will reach out and do something different, a government that will acknowledge that what it has done in the past is not sufficient given the length and the gravity of the spiral, not only in this province, but in Canada and around the world in global markets. We are looking for a government that will do something to sustain and create good jobs and help families where workers are facing layoffs, provide better protections and fairer benefits.

Ontarians were expecting to see something real in poverty—and I'm glad to see that the poverty minister is here to hear what I have to say; I was across in the Macdonald Block an hour or so ago to hear what she had to say, and I hope she will now listen to what I have to say on this topic—that is, looking for real action on poverty. It is not just a time when fall economic statements are put forward on where monies are to be spent, to give platitudes and to say that we're studying and that we are waiting for December, but I think it would have been appropriate for the finance minister and the Premier to stand in their places and quite literally say how the fall economic statement could have accelerated the poverty plan, how there could have been a down payment to that plan, and even if the plan was not ready there are certain things that could have been done and should have been done immediately to help those who are starting to suffer the economic downturn that is invariably upon this province. Nothing was said, and nothing was done. Instead, after repeated question upon question, there was nothing said or done about poverty on that day. In fact, there has been nothing said or done about it to this very day.

I commend the minister for speaking to the 300 or 400 people who were at the Macdonald Block, but I think in the end what was short, and certainly what the woman who sat next to me said—there wasn't much in that speech. It was a nice speech, and she congratulated the participants for having been party to it. She promised to take their message back to the cabinet. But there was no commitment—and perhaps she doesn't have the authority to make the commitment—to actually do something, to actually find the monies, the mechanisms, the bureaucracy and everything else that is going to give some meat and substance to the proposal. There was no commitment

to do that. That's what we in this opposition, and particularly in the NDP, have been looking for so that low-income families, where most of the devastation will occur by the economic downturn, would have a better chance to survive it.

Ontarians wanted to see continued investments at the same time in public services that matter the most in terms of hospitals, education and municipal infrastructure. The fall economic statement was that opportunity for a real plan, but it failed to reverse the course, and it failed to deliver any kind of cogent plan or sustain jobs. As I said before, and as I've said today, the word "poverty" was not mentioned once, and the economic statement signalled to the public that the services they count on will be the first, perhaps, on the chopping block if the government decides that that's where it has to go.

This government has failed 230,000 families in good times. Now they are asking, by Bill 114, for us to trust them for the next year and a half; for the same government, the same process, the same five-point plan and the same platitudes to be given credibility and to be acted upon when the government is in bad times.

New Democrats do not believe that that's the way we should go. New Democrats believe that we should be putting forward a real plan, a plan that would assist manufacturing and resource sectors and would prevent the massive job losses that have devastated many communities across the province.

As I said, Madam Speaker, there have been a lot of jobs lost in this province in the last little while. Just some recent examples: 430 jobs, or 80% of the workforce, at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg were chopped; in Niagara in the last month, 800 jobs were lost at John Deere in Welland; and the temporary layoff of another 480 at AbitibiBowater. Lost since June 2004 are 100,000 manufacturing jobs in Toronto, 25,000 in your city of Hamilton and almost half of Thunder Bay's manufacturing jobs. Forest industry jobs, of course, have been lost as well. I should not have to tell the government opposite and its members how important manufacturing and resource jobs are, because once they are lost, they are never likely to come back, and we will become a society and a country and a province where we used to provide our own resources; we used to provide our own manufacturing goods. We will, with the loss of these jobs, increasingly have to go and find them elsewhere. Whether it is the sweaters manufactured in Mexico, whether it is automobile parts that come from Korea, whether it is computers that come from many countries around the world, or finances that come from the United States, or commodities that come from Europe, or agriculture—and who knows where it comes from these days?—these are things that Ontarians used to produce with pride, and they are things that are being lost, unfortunately, with a government that does not take a proactive and pro-Ontario policy.

The Dalton McGuinty government has pretended that the current job crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but we know that there is a lot more going on out there.

Just a few things:

The second-quarter economic accounts released by the Minister of Finance last month showed that the output from the manufacturing sector continues to decline. Exports declined 2.5%, particularly in the automotive, industrial goods and materials sectors. With the United States in freefall, this is expected to get worse. We know that the economy in the United States is getting worse, and it is getting worse at a faster rate than it is getting worse here. We saw what was happening in the automotive sector, and I remember the statement made by Mr. Ken Lewenza, the new president of the Canadian Autoworkers, where he talked about the inability of Canadian plants to produce the goods that they once did. It was not because they were not cost-effective, because, in fact, they were cost-effective. It was not because Canadians and Ontarians were not buying the products, because, in fact, Canadian and Ontario markets had gone up 1% or 2% and people were buying the cars that were built here. But the fact is that they were seeing an 18% decline in Chrysler, and I believe it was a 13%, if my memory is good, in Ford, and to a lesser extent in General Motors in terms of decline, because where the cars were not being bought was in the United States. Because that country's economy was tanking, our economy was being dragged down with it and the workers who were producing those goods were not in a position to produce them anymore.

But the real news is that when you combine reports from the first two quarters of this year, it becomes clear that the rest of the economy is no longer picking up the slack and we are ending up with declining output in many sectors of the broader economy. The retail sector, financial services and construction are in trouble. Statistics Canada released a report on retail trade last week that showed a decline in retail sales in Canada by 0.3%. Although that may sound small, this eventually will lead to big losses of jobs. We know that the time when people start to buy most of their goods and services is in the three- or four-month period leading up to Christmas. This is the biggest sales time of all, and in the month of September we saw a decline. This is not normal, it is not natural, it is not something that happens a lot, but it is a decline.

We are seeing in our chief trading partner, the United States, a huge reduction in retail sales. Usually this is the time, leading up to Thanksgiving, when people go out and start buying in huge amounts for the Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays—it's the biggest shopping day of the year in the United States—and the retailers there are telling us that they expect much slower sales. As go they, so shall we go.

The US credit crunch is creating higher mortgage costs in Canada, and when combined with higher unemployment and lower incomes, declines in residential construction are on the horizon. As the 2009 Emerging Trends in Real Estate Report states, "Less volatile Canadian real estate markets cannot avoid shockwaves emanating from the big elephant in the room next door."

That's bad news for our construction sector, which employs over 400,000 workers.

Stock market declines and the collapse of international banking institutions are likely to lead to layoffs or less hiring in the financial services sector. As I speak, there are layoffs taking place on Wall Street; there are layoffs being contemplated on Bay Street and in many financial sectors around the world. Hence, governments across the world—in Britain, in Iceland, in the United States and even here in Canada—are running to the banking sectors trying to give money to stave off what is happening. But as they run to those banking sectors, there are other sectors that are being ignored. Job losses in previously untouched sectors—retail, construction and now even financial services—may very well be on the immediate horizon.

1520

I don't want to be a doomsayer, and I know much of what I'm saying—but I want to say how this is the enormity of what is going to confront the finance minister. This is the enormity of why he will not answer questions of what he anticipates being in next year's budget or whether he's going to be in a budget deficit position. It is an enormous proposition before him, and he will not answer it. But I think we need to talk about that and why we ought not to be giving carte blanche for this government, in this bill, to spend monies up until March 31, 2010. The TD Economics report a couple of weeks ago forecast negative employment growth in 2009. Their report reads: "Real GDP growth in Ontario is expected to barely advance in 2008 and 2009, placing it last amongst its peers. The lagging nature of employment in reflecting economic conditions leaves significant downside risks to the job market, especially since the manufacturing sector is expected to continue to bleed jobs and this will disproportionately hit the province."

Faced with this, growing numbers of manufacturing and resource sector workers, gloomy statistics and report after report forecasting further job losses, the McGuinty government has finally recognized that there is trouble on the horizon. But their answer is a five-point plan. That five-point plan didn't work in good times. I don't know how they expect it's going to work in bad times. We think something more needs to be done, and we have been proposing some real things that we think can be done, because we believe that governments need to be upfront. They need to be there when you're trying to do something for the economy, when the private sector and private sector monies are failing to do what needs to be done, or where they're suffering through the greed or incapacity or being incapable of running their own businesses. There needs to be a group like a government that can step in. We believe that in our party; we believe it with all our hearts.

Some people in the past may have thought, "Leave everything to the private sector." But when you look today, even their gurus—Greenspan, called before the committee, had to admit that leaving it totally up to the private sector had been a huge mistake, that something he

had talked about for years and years, of leaving it up to the private sector, ought not to have happened. It ought not to have taken place in the United States, and it has been to everyone's detriment since then. So we believe that something needs to be done and that the governments have a role.

The other night I was on *The Agenda*—I don't know if it's called *The Agenda* anymore—with Steve Paikin, and I was there with Diane Francis, a well-known columnist and author. She's with the *National Post*. There was a fellow there from CIBC, and Mr. Hudak was there, Mr. Sorbara and I. We were all there debating what was happening in the economy. What surprised me was that Diane Francis came four-square out in talking about the need for governments to intervene; that governments had a role, especially in times of financial turmoil, to be the steadying influence, to be the safe captain at the rudder, to be able to do something to stimulate the economy. I'd never heard such words from her before. I had never heard someone with her passion for the marketplace coming in and acknowledging what the circumstances might be where governments had a role. But she certainly upbraided the member from—it used to be Erie–Lincoln, now it's something—Glanbrook—Mr. Hudak.

Interjection: Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. She certainly upbraided him for saying that the government should not be intervening at this time, and she quite eloquently, in just a few words, stated why that was necessary. But we don't believe that the McGuinty government is any more activist in this file than Mr. Hudak was saying that we should be. We think that the government should not be looking at simply staying the course but that they should be doing something actively to promote industry and jobs in the province of Ontario.

We have put some real proposals on the table and I have not yet heard what has happened to them, because I know when we had a debate on the opposition day motion last week put forward by Mr. Runciman, it was a motion that called for an all-party select committee to travel the province to hear ways of stimulating and working with others on the economy—that it should be made up of individuals from the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, and that we should be able to come together and form some kind of consensus on where we lead this province. I stood up in support of that motion not only because I thought it was the right thing to do, but I believe that members from all sides of this House have an obligation, in times of potential turmoil, to give their best efforts. If those best efforts involve members of my party, members of the opposition, members of the government, and if it takes all of us to work together, then I think that that is where we should go.

Perhaps it was in my naive time or my time as a municipal councillor and mayor, where—I'm not sure I was naive; maybe "naive" is not the right word—we worked together. We came up with a consensus solution that always seemed to work. We involved everyone around

the table, whether it be in East York where there were nine of us or the city of Toronto megacity, where there were 57 of us. We sat around that table, we came up with a consensus, we voted on the consensus and we used all the best ideas and the best heads and the best knowledge and strengths that everyone had to come to a consensus, particularly on difficult issues. We saw the leadership of the mayor. We saw the leadership of some of the people that the mayor had chosen, whether it was in East York or, again, of the 57 members in Toronto. And I know that that is literally true of all the 480 municipalities across this province. It is true in forms of municipal government, where they don't have the separation at two sword-lengths across this aisle. They don't have that separation and they are compelled to work together, and they do, in fact, work together. That is something that I was hoping, and I still hope against hope, that this government will acknowledge and will try to do.

When the Premier stood up on his own motion, he said he wanted to hear all of our advice. He wanted to hear all of the best ideas that we have, but that motion is still ongoing. That has been weeks now, weeks in the making, and we're still arguing it. It has still not come to resolution and it has not come to a vote. When the Conservatives put forward their motion basically asking that all of these ideas be thrown into a select committee, I welcomed it. But I have to tell you, my hopes were dashed. The hopes were not great but my hopes that such a resolution might be passed were dashed when literally every single member of the government stood up and spoke against it and then voted against it.

What were the ideas we were trying to put forward? We were trying to put forward, I think, sane and sensible ideas for turning this economy around. Now I know it's going to be difficult in one province in one medium-sized country to turn around the entire global economic tsunami; it's going to be difficult. But if we sit here and do nothing, then we are failing the people of Ontario. I think, within the limits that we have available to us, there are things that we need to discuss, things that, when I put them forward in this Legislature, all too often are not listened to, all too often are not acted upon, all too often end in the abyss, and the government goes on with its own five-point plan and listens to nothing else.

1530

We are putting forward ideas—and I put them forward again today—that we think will help enormously in this time of job loss. The first one is a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways, buses, be continued to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs. I don't limit myself just to that; that's what our motion has said in the past. I also believe that everything that is produced or can be produced in this province, if the value is close to or near the lowest cost that is available, should be taken from here.

I certainly heard the question today about the RCMP sweaters, and I have to tell you how saddened I am that the government of the province of Ontario has not put

forward the plan that the sweaters be made here in Canada. I'm not familiar with the manufacturing plant in Guelph, but I am very familiar with the manufacturing plant called Dorothea Knitting Mills, which is within the borders of the old borough of East York. It's run by a wonderful man by the name of Beryl Borsook. Beryl Borsook literally built that factory that is there today at the time of the last depression in Ontario. I'm talking about the years 1990 to 1995. I was the mayor of East York, and he came to me with a plan to build that factory. It was his belief that Canadians could compete in making garments with anyone in the world. He was prepared to spend the money. He bought machinery from abroad in many cases, because the knitting machines had to come from there because they were not manufactured in Canada. But he believed that once those knitting machines were installed, everything else that flowed from that, from the materials used—the yarns, the wools—could be made in Canada and they could be produced by Canadians working in those knitting mills. He was and continues to be very successful.

But where he is not successful is selling to Canada, to Canadians and to governments. He finds that all too often, when he puts in a proposal, his costs are more than those offshore. He has a difficult time competing with workers and manufacturers in China and he has a difficult time competing with workers and manufacturers in Mexico. It's not because the quality of his product is any worse—in fact, it's better—and it's not because he is not doing a huge service to the environment because everything is being produced locally with Canadian-made goods. When you buy a sweater made in his factory in the former borough of East York, the costs to transport it into downtown Toronto are negligible in the cost per item. He's not harming the economy; he's doing a great service. But he has difficulties because governments in this country will not do what governments in literally every other country around the world do, and that is to buy directly from the people who live here.

He explained to me on one occasion about the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the United States, which was unknown to me. It was a difficult act to fathom until he explained it in a nutshell, which was that if you are going to sell anything to a US military establishment, then the goods must be made in the United States. He is the only manufacturer of berets in North America. He makes berets as part of what he does, and American soldiers wear berets. He supplied them for years with berets until the Sarbanes-Oxley Act came along, but then he couldn't do it anymore because the berets couldn't be manufactured in Canada; they had to come from the United States, even though there was nobody in the United States who manufactured them, so he had to. What he did was, he set up a small company and he went down there. In order to continue to sell the berets, he had to move part of his operation from Canada and move the beret-making machines down to the United States in order to supply the US military.

I only raise this because this is what has happened to Canadian industry. Even a man who can compete so

brilliantly, as he has done, even a factory that employs workers who are all Canadians, who make those goods for sale, cannot compete because there are protectionist attitudes elsewhere. If the United States can do that for its military, I don't know why Canada and Ontario can't do that for the RCMP. I do not understand why the sweaters have to be made in Mexico. Are they cheaper? Yes. Can a man like Mr. Borsook compete with the wages that are paid in Mexico? No, he cannot, and rightly so. We expect him to pay minimum wage—although he pays above that, here in Toronto—but we expect that the workers will all make \$8.75 or more an hour. Can that compete with manufacturing where it's \$1 an hour? No, it cannot. Is that why he's losing business? Yes, it is.

Should the government, though, be buying those sweaters, or should they be buying them when they're made here? I think the answer is very clear: We should be buying those that are made here. I know that many municipalities, including the one of which I was the mayor, and later the one of which I was a megacity councillor, had a policy that did the same thing: We bought things made in Ontario. We had a policy in East York that when we tendered, if the locally produced supplier could supply it at a cost of no more than 10% higher than the lowest bidder, we would buy it from them. We knew that it might cost a little more money, but we also knew that we were buying the goods and services first of all from East York companies and then Toronto companies and then Ontario companies and then Canadian companies that would keep manufacturing jobs in this country. I think it's a good policy and I would like the government to adopt such a policy. I think it's a policy that Canadians and Ontarians would adopt and agree with. But so far, to date, no one is hearing that on the government side of the House.

We think there should be a five-year guarantee of an industrial hydro rate so that some of the industries can get past the difficulties that they're having here in Ontario with a hydro rate that is expanding, that is continuing to go up. I see this primarily not so much from the Americans or from Mexico or from offshore, but in terms of Ontario being competitive with its neighbours, both in Manitoba and in Quebec.

I know that the government will stand up from time to time and tell me that there are a lot more flowing rivers and hydroelectric capacity in northern Manitoba and Quebec and going into James Bay, and that is true. But we have capacity of different kinds. We have capacity, whether it's from solar or windmill; from coal generation, which is being phased out; from nuclear, which is expensive—but we have capacity, and a lot of that electricity can be given over to an industrial hydro rate. Certainly, countries like Germany have relied upon that for years, where industrial hydro rates are given and where jobs are protected. I think we could protect a lot of jobs if we looked at that.

I'm looking at a jobs protection commissioner. We've floated this idea, and the government keeps standing up and saying it didn't work in British Columbia. It was there for a long time, until a new government took over

and, surprise amongst surprise, did things that all new governments do: They got rid of old ideas from the previous government. This was one that did not make the chopping block when the new Liberal government was elected with the fall of the NDP government there a number of years ago. But while it was there, there is a very arguable case that jobs were protected. The commissioner did go into a number of factories that were scheduled to close down, found out what the problem was—whether it was that the electricity rates were too high, whether it was that the contract signed in a unionized place was too high, whether there were some transportation difficulties, whatever it was—and then went back and reported to the government what would be necessary to keep the factory operating. It worked, and sometimes the government could help and sometimes they couldn't.

But even if we can save one factory or two factories or 10 factories from closing down in Ontario, we think it's an idea whose time has come. We believe in tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing, and in addition an enhanced mandated severance. It is a shame when factories close down and you know—and the factories reveal in their books—that they're still making a profit. Perhaps not as much profit as they'd make in Mexico; perhaps not as much profit as the parent company in the United States; perhaps not as much profit as they want, to diversify into another area—but they're still making a profit.

We think that there should be some tougher plant closure legislation. I hearken back—and I've spoken about this in the past in the Legislature—to one of my first jobs, at a place called Dunlop's, which combined with Pirelli, an Italian company, and saw fit to close down the plant even though it was profitable, throwing 600 or 700 people out of work. It's a thing we should not accept. It is a thing which we absolutely should not accept, provided that it is profitable.

We should look at the expansion of severance eligibility. We should look at pensions and wage protection. Last but not least, we should look at a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit that would really provide an incentive to keep jobs going. We need to do that because if we can do that in combination with the other things, we can keep manufacturing plants going into the future. After all, that is what is important. Rather than doing a holus-bolus, across-the-board tax cut, which my friends in the Conservatives often want to talk about or that the Minister of Finance often lauds among his accomplishments, we believe that it should be targeted to the sectors that are most vulnerable. Those sectors, at the present time, are the manufacturing sectors and the forestry sector. If we're going to give tax cuts, it has to be tied in with the retention of jobs. We think that this is the vehicle to do it. We're asking that you consider this idea, but so far, no one has.

1540

In terms of poverty—again, I'm getting back to my poverty theme because today seemed to be a day for

poverty—I was heartened by the 300 or 400 people who were in the room. I'm just using an estimate. I'm not like the police, who can estimate crowds, but it seemed to me that there were 300 or 400 people in that room.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess there were at least six Liberals there.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know the minister was there because I watched her speak.

There were people in that room who have spent a lot of time talking about the 25 in five program, getting poverty down 25% in five years. We think that the economic statement that was released in the fall and Bill 114 should have done something to give us an indication that we're going there.

I know that some of the poverty activists, in their fifth point, were talking about a down payment in the budget, but I don't believe we can wait that long, nor do I believe we need to wait that long. There are certain things that this government could do now and that they could have done in this financial statement that would have indicated where they are going to proceed and certainly where we, as a government, need to spend money.

Something that wouldn't cost very much money, if anything at all, to the government, would be to increase the minimum wage. When we ask this question, the government says, "Well, we've increased it," and, yes, they have. It was frozen for so many years, it was so abysmally and ridiculously low, that the government finally was forced to agree that it was low, and they increased it. Nobody is going to say the increase is bad. The increase is better than nothing. Almost every person I know who works for that minimum wage is happier that it is higher today than it was last year. Of course, they're not going to say no. But is it enough? Does this government honestly believe that the minimum wage is enough for people who are forced to work on it? You have to remember who the people are. They are predominantly women, and many, if not most, of those women are recent immigrants. They are people coming here who are trying to land a first job, who are trying to make ends meet, who are trying to feed their family, who are trying to get ahead in a new society. They are often-times young people and students who are trying to save to go to university or to college or to higher education and are being forced to work for minimum wage. We don't think it's enough. It would cost the government almost nothing if you increased the minimum wage from its present status to \$10.25. You've said you're going to do that by the year 2010, but we think that it can be done today, we think it should be done today. If that was done, that would be one of the single greatest actions you could take, that costs the government nothing, in order to help end poverty. Certainly, if someone earned \$10.25 an hour and worked a 40-hour week, they would make the equivalent of about \$21,000 a year. The poverty rate in Ontario, according to the low-income cut-off figures, is about \$19,000 a year for a single person, so if a single person working 40 hours a week earned \$10.25 an hour, they would be out of poverty. That is not a radical

concept, and I think the government could adopt that without costing the treasury any money.

Another thing I want to talk about that might cost the treasury a little bit—but so help me, I believe with all my soul, and I hope the members opposite do too—is not clawing back the monies that people on ODSP make when they go out and find a job. I particularly think about the developmentally disabled people I know. There is a wonderful group called Lemon and Allspice, part of a group called Common Ground. They hire young men and women, mostly in their 20s and 30s, who are developmentally delayed, and help them to work in kitchens producing coffee and baked goods, which they in turn go out and sell. But as Carolyn Lemon explained to me one day—it was very sad—these young people who do everything in their power to try to get ahead and work and do wonderful things are all on ODSP. They are all developmentally delayed. They come and get this job, and then the government claws some or most of it back. It seems to me that what is happening is a shame.

I don't believe that being born developmentally delayed or with the kinds of inherent problems one is born with should be tantamount to living in poverty for your entire life. I'm going to ask this question in estimates tomorrow, because I'm going to have my chance: How much money does the government claw back today from people who are on ODSP or are developmentally disabled? How much money are you clawing back from them, and what would it cost the government to end that? What would it cost you to end it so that at the end of the day with a combination of the \$12,000 a year, which is the maximum they can get on ODSP, and allowing them to earn another \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year, they would be above the poverty level? For the first time, being developmentally delayed would not be a life sentence of poverty. I ask, if a government is committed to do that, why not? Why not take that action? How much will it cost? It's a suggestion I'd like to make.

I'd like to make the suggestion about building affordable homes. I know that we asked the question, and I know that the government continues to talk about the 6,000 affordable homes, some of which have been built, some of which are being built, some of which are planned to be built and some of which are still a gleam in a developer's eye; that's all of the 6,000. I wonder—we have an economic statement before us—how much it would cost the government to move this up rapidly. We have the \$100 million that was given by the federal government, not all of which has been spent. We have a huge, desperate and crying need in this province for people to have affordable housing.

I went to see one of my constituents, an elderly lady who asked me to come to her home to talk about her application for assisted housing. She is living in assisted housing now, but she simply wanted to move from one location to another that was perhaps more culturally sensitive. She is an Ismaili woman and wanted to be close to the Jamatkhana because she is devout and likes to go there to pray from time to time. Also, the place

where she is living is not in close proximity to grocery stores. The closest one was shut down a number of years ago, and there is a grocery store next door to the place where she wants to go. There is the Jamatkhana, there is her doctor, and she simply wants to move.

I told her I would do my very best to inquire into her application to move from one location to the other, which was now seven years in the making. When we inquired into it, sadly I was told that the wait is from 12 to 15 years. The reason it's from 12 to 15 years is because virtually no assisted housing has been built in our area for a long, long time. That's for somebody who is already in there. That's not for somebody new. That was not going to displace anyone.

She was simply going to leave one place, which was going to be freed up, to go to another place. But the waiting list in that location was from 12 to 15 years long. If it is from 12 to 15 years for a senior citizen to find an appropriate place to live, think of how long it is for families who have to wait. I would think that if there is to be any money spent—and this may be the lone and sole thing I talk about here that costs money—this is where it should be spent. I am asking the government, quite frankly, to consider this.

I care very deeply and passionately about people and about the poor. As I have said in this place and to Minister Matthews one time in a heated discussion, I'm from Regent Park. I care passionately about poor people and what we can do to help them. I care particularly passionately that governments can have a role to play, and it need not cost governments a lot of money, whether it's ending the clawback of the national child benefit, which I know some people are talking about—it's not done yet. It's not going to take place until 2011. It could be done faster. I will salute you in 2011, but I would rather salute you now. I would rather say in 2008 that it has been done and that we've let people keep the money for three years rather than wait for three additional years. Whether it's helping the disabled, whether it's helping communities or building housing, this is where the emphasis should be.

1550

As I said, there was no discussion of that in the fall economic statement, and I believe with all my heart that there should have been. This is where the government needs to go. It's certainly what the activists had to say today: that they cannot wait and they should not wait. This government needs to find the courage—and I hope the minister still has her courage button, because they gave it to her—to find those monies and to find the political courage and the will, if there are not those monies available, to find some other way to do it.

I talked earlier about deficits. I know that to my friends in the Conservative Party the word “deficit” is an anathema. I don't say that I want to go there, and I would go there only reluctantly, but as I did state the other night on the Steve Paikin show, if you are smart about a deficit, as long as you keep the GDP-to-deficit ratio low, then it is not something one needs to fear. In Ontario, we have a

very low GDP-to-deficit ratio. It is around 17.5%, which is absolutely enormously low. It hasn't been this low in a generation or two generations. It could move up to 20% without damaging the economy. I would be reluctant to go beyond that, and I don't want people to think this is just a high-spending person. But we could do that in the short term. In the longer term, though, we are going to have to look at sources of revenue. We are going to have to look at how we do that, to help the poor.

I have a couple of minutes left. I just want to talk about municipalities as we close. Municipalities are in for a very rough ride. In this present time of economic downturn, municipalities have very few sources of funds from which to get their monies. They rely, to a large extent, on property taxes. Property taxes are regressive. We have seen with the bills that have just gone out how certain people are being whacked. I gave the example today in question period of two women in Richmond Hill who have seen their properties re-valued by \$200,000 and \$300,000. So the properties that they are sitting on—their retirement home, the place where one of them has lived for 40 years, is now worth a lot more than what they purchased it for. As a result of the increases, they are going to see huge increases in their taxes. The government's answer is to simply give a \$250 tax credit, but only to those who qualify—there's a whole bunch of provisos; they can't be behind in their taxes. Although I don't understand that, because people who are behind in their taxes probably need the help more than those who are not behind in their taxes. That can be looked at. But municipalities have only this source. We need and the government needs—before October 31, and then definitely; I am loath to give the minister even one more day to go there—to come to that accord. We need to know when the downloading is going to be reversed. This has been discussed with the municipalities now for a year. It has been extended twice. I'm afraid it is going to be extended again. The government needs, in this economic statement and definitely in the next budget, to start looking very seriously at uploading the download, making sure that the municipalities are solvent and making sure that there are other ways they can find monies. Certainly the property tax is regressive, and certainly people who study property taxes around the world will give us one very serious lesson: They will tell you point-blank to our faces here in Ontario that the property taxes in Ontario are the highest in the entire world. No other jurisdiction in Europe—

Mr. Mike Colle: That's not true.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is true. I invite member Colle to actually study the thing. We pay the highest taxes in all of Canada because of the download, and we pay the highest taxes in the world because no one else relies upon it to the same extent. We need to find ways of making sure that the province pays for those programs that are provincially mandated and to leave the municipalities, which have only one source of revenue, to those things for which they are responsible. I ask that the government seriously look at that, and that they study it before too long and come forward with a program.

In the end, this government is going to have to find the money; it's going to have to do things that are necessary. I have outlined what some of those are—jobs, poverty, municipalities—and I'm simply asking them to get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Il me fait plaisir de me joindre à la discussion sur le projet de loi 114 parce que c'est très important pour moi et pour mon gouvernement de présenter un budget équilibré. Je pense qu'on l'a démontré depuis qu'on a été élu en 2003. On a toujours présenté—pour trois ans, en fait—un budget équilibré et c'est très important pour nous.

Mais depuis qu'on a présenté notre budget en mars 2008, la situation financière mondiale a changé. Le ralentissement de l'économie américaine a causé des problèmes ici en Ontario et au Canada, et je pense qu'un gouvernement doit revoir ces situations-là et s'ajuster aux situations économiques. On avait le choix de faire ce que le gouvernement avant nous avait fait : c'est-à-dire couper les prestations d'aide sociale de 22 %. On avait le choix de mettre à pied des infirmières et des professeurs; on avait le choix de fermer des hôpitaux; on avait le choix de mettre à pied des fonctionnaires comme les inspecteurs pour la viande et pour l'eau.

On avait beaucoup de choix, mais on a décidé de modifier notre budget, d'accepter un budget déficitaire et d'augmenter la dette, mais tout cela en ayant la situation des Ontariens à cœur. J'appuie que pour cette année, vu la situation financière qui est tellement incertaine—même les grands économistes ne peuvent pas prévoir ce qui va se passer demain, alors c'est difficile pour un gouvernement, et on veut s'assurer que les Ontariens continueront à bénéficier des services qu'ils ont maintenant, tout en étant prudents dans nos dépenses.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Merci. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to make a few brief comments regarding the statements made by the member from Beaches–East York on the budget bill. He raised a number of points, but I would specifically like to comment on the fact that the Ontario budget, or the economic statement, indicated that we are going to be running into a deficit of at least \$500 million this year. I think he is quite right in saying that normally deficit financing is anathema to Conservatives. However, we haven't faced anything like the current economic climate and it is something that—who knows what conditions are going to be in future years?—may or may not dictate a need to go into a deficit for at least a short period of time.

The problem with the deficit that is being contemplated by the McGuinty government is the fact that we're contemplating a deficit for this year. It is hard to believe that that could have happened after five years of record surpluses.

We've heard a lot from the Minister of Finance about what a prudent and responsible government would have

done. Well, a prudent and responsible government, to me, during that time period would have set aside funds and used them to pay down the debt so that in the event hard times come there would be a cushion there, an ability to have some money available so that we wouldn't have to go into a deficit.

This is important because, of course, it means that we are paying more and more in interest payments because this government has managed to rack up in its unprecedented spending spree an additional \$30 billion of debt since it came to power. That means an extra \$6,500 per family in Ontario. So that's during the good years.

The concern with the deficit that is being contemplated here is if that's what happens in the good years, what's going to happen in the next few years as things get tougher and tougher? The concern is that what is meant as a temporary deficit is going to turn into a structural deficit that we are going to be dealing with for years to come.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to rise in this House and talk about Bill 114. This bill is a reflection of the current economic reality of the world which has been imposed on us from sources outside of our boundary, mainly in the United States, where the economic situation is sluggish and the banking system, as we all know, has collapsed. This affected not only us in Ontario or Canada; it affected almost every country around the world.

Speakers who spoke earlier talked about the deficit of this budget. The reality is that the current economic outlook is projecting 0.1% economic growth. In the meantime, there is a \$500-million deficit projected in this budget review, but when you compare this figure of \$500 million to our budget of almost \$97 billion, this constitutes something around 0.5%, which is not very significant. It's actually very minimum.

When you look at the budget provisions, you will see that all programs which were indicated in the original budget for 2008-09 will continue to be funded. We'll continue to fund our schools. We'll continue to invest in our hospitals. We'll continue to invest in our universities and colleges. The only thing which this budget actually proposes is, there will be some slow investments in programs which we haven't started yet. Other than that, the remaining projects will continue.

As we know, one of the items of our budget is the almost \$3-billion tax cut for industries and businesses where they really need tax cuts. We are not going to cut taxes for every industry—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to comment on the speech from the member from Beaches–East York on Bill 114, the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2008.

The member was talking about the much-vaunted retraining program. Back in the spring when they were

doing the spring budget, there was a huge focus on training. He pointed out that, despite the fact that there were 230,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost in the province, this program was only going to address less than 10%, at 20,000. The actual participation rate in the Second Career program is some 1,000 people, so it has been a huge, huge failure, and that was correctly pointed out by the member from Beaches–East York.

We, on this side of Legislature, the Progressive Conservative Party, have been asking that the government change their apprenticeship ratio policy. They could make a very simple change and it wouldn't cost them anything to be like all the rest of the provinces in this country, where, instead of there being a three-to-one apprenticeship ratio where you need three journeymen for one electrician, as an example, we match what the rest of the country does: one journeyman for one apprentice. That provides all kinds of opportunities for young people or those switching careers to have training opportunities.

This is a budget bill. The McGuinty government is a tax-and-spend government. They went in 2003 from \$68 billion in spending to now the huge sum of \$96 billion. They've increased spending 50%. The only government to increase almost that much was the David Peterson Liberal government. They did that in good years, so when bad times hit, the province of Ontario was very vulnerable. We're doing the same thing now. You've put us in a vulnerable situation. You had \$5 billion extra money last year. You spent every dime of it—every dime. It's unbelievable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Beaches–East York with a response.

Mr. Michael Prue: A couple of things. To the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Whitby–Oshawa, the member from Richmond Hill and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka: I thank you very much for your comments.

The Minister of Community and Social Services talked about the downturn of the world economy. She said something that I think was prescient and correct, and that is that it's very difficult for economists today to determine in which place the economy is going. I don't disagree with her, and I think that is very true. But it is also the reason why I am reluctant to give the government cart blanche to spend all of the money that it is requesting between now and March 31, 2010. I started out with that, and I am in full agreement. That is what is being asked for in this bill: that the government be allowed to spend everything that it puts forward in front of this House and to have the monies to do so until that time.

Without knowing what is happening with the international economy, without knowing how Ontario's place is in it, without knowing that there are some programs and priorities that this government will come forward with to protect jobs and help the poor, I am reluctant to grant that authority.

To the other members—the member from Whitby–Oshawa talked about structural deficits, and I thank her

for that because I don't think there's any way that my comments should be misconstrued about building in structural deficits. I think that, in the short term, if we wanted to increase the deficit by a very small amount consistent with the GDP-to-debt ratio up to no more than 20, we would have play for about an extra billion dollars, and that may be necessary, given the circumstances. But in the long term, we need to pay as we go, and I believe that all parties of all stripes have learned that lesson from the past. I certainly have, and would advocate that.

Having said that, I thank the members for what they had to say, and I'm looking forward to hearing what other debate might come forward on this important topic.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Indeed, it's a pleasure for me to have an opportunity to spend some time this afternoon on Bill 114, the budget bill. Every day in the House, we hear about job losses, and there's no question that any time that a job is lost, it has a tremendous impact on one's immediate family and indeed beyond one's family on the community at large. We know the ripple effect and we certainly understand that that has extreme repercussions when a job is lost.

But it's interesting: There are some real success stories going on in the province of Ontario. This morning, I had the opportunity to visit Flying Colours Corp., which is headquartered at Peterborough airport in my riding. They've been in business for 25 years, and they have a very unique business: They refurbish corporate jets internationally. This is a company—and I know that I'm not allowed to use props, but here are two very interesting brochures that are put out by Flying Colours Corp. This is a company that's locally owned in Peterborough. John Gillespie is the owner and chief executive officer, and between John and his lovely daughter Kate Gillespie, whom my wife taught in elementary school a number of years ago, they gave me a tour of what is a rapidly expanding business in the Peterborough area.

Currently, they have about 300 employees, all very highly skilled employees. What's relevant to this debate is that they've utilized the skills-to-jobs program. In fact, they've hired, of late, 14 people who went through the skills-to-jobs program with Fleming College here in Peterborough. I'll put in a plug for my good friend Tony Tilly, the president. They took these individuals, whose jobs had been lost in the Peterborough area, and put them through this program very successfully, and now they're working for Flying Colours in the technical side of that operation. They're refurbishing jets for Raytheon, Falcon, Bombardier, Cessna and Gulfstream—the only company in Canada that's really in this market area, which is why they're having international success.

Over the last little while, we've heard some rather unfortunate comments about the Minister of International Trade going throughout the world to drum up business for the province of Ontario. When I visited this Peterborough company this morning, sitting on their tarmac was a jet that they've just refurbished for a customer in

India, and a second jet that was sitting on their tarmac for a customer in China. What John Gillespie said to me was that we need the government of Ontario and indeed the government of Canada—to have the Prime Minister and the Premier's cabinet ministers to be in jurisdictions like India and China to drum up business.

I worked for a small business in Peterborough, the Coyle Packaging Group, prior to my election in 2003, and one of the last things you do during challenging economic times is to go out and lay off your sales staff. You need people, each and every day, to be out promoting what Ontario has to offer. The Premier has left for China to drum up business in China. I just gave you two good examples of a company in Peterborough that's going to be looking at expanding its base in China and India and utilizing young men and women who have gone through Fleming College, through the skills-to-training program, to get jobs at a very successful company.

The Minister for International Trade recently visited Dubai. I learned this morning, during my tour of Flying Colours, that one of the largest aviation shows in the world—everybody thinks it's in Paris—is in Dubai. Companies from around the world go to Dubai to put on display the recent technology that they have to offer in the executive jet field. It attracts people from all around the world to go to Dubai. The other one, of course, that Ontario is present at is in the United States, in Orlando, Florida, in terms of executive jets.

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The other company that's doing extremely well on the manufacturing side—and I alluded to it before—is GE in Peterborough, which is now on its largest recruitment drive internationally since the mid-1970s. Of course, they're in the field. They build custom motors that are used offshore. Again, their customer base: China, India, and Europe—real opportunities to build that base. Again, how we enhance those opportunities is with the Premier, members of the executive council—indeed, the government of Canada—working with our embassies and consulates abroad to drum up business right here in Ontario.

Indeed, there's no question there are challenges. We know that the auto sector is going through a real transformation. But I think we have to be cautious that we don't see all of Ontario's manufacturing sector just through the eyes of the Big Three. We all recognize that they're going through a pretty profound transformation at this time.

Indeed, of course, the other bright spot for GE products in Peterborough—GE Peterborough is the head of their nuclear products division. Their business has expanded tremendously over the last number of years. They were partners for AECL in two China projects. I should mention that they were on time, on budget, in terms of those two rather large projects in China, and they're going through a tremendous expansion right now.

There's a lot of good news out there, and we've got to build on those success stories.

Just recently, I had the opportunity to read the Canadian edition of Time magazine, and they talk about

global business prospects over the next number of years. It's interesting. They surveyed 130 places in the world to rate global competitiveness, and in 2007, Canada ranked 13th, and in 2008, we have moved up to number 10.

One of the things I think we need to do as a government is to set our sights and say, "How can we get Ontario and Canada perhaps in the top five when it comes to global competitiveness?" And one of the ways we do that—and we can do that through the Ministry of Research and Innovation—is by putting those dollars into concepts that are currently on the drawing board and getting those concepts into the marketplace. This article goes on to say that in order to survive in the future, homegrown businesses are going to have to become global leaders.

It's interesting. For this article, they surveyed 14 countries, and they looked at the near-term potential for them to become global leaders. It says here: "China is home to the greatest number of global challengers, with 41; followed by India, with 20; Brazil, with 13; and then Mexico, Russia and Turkey." It says that together, these countries that I just mentioned represent about 17.3% of the world's total economic output, or gross domestic product, in 2006.

The challenge for Ontario and Canada is to foster those economic policies that will allow us to grow innovation in the province of Ontario so that ultimately these Ontario and Canadian companies become world leaders and dominate the global marketplace in identified markets.

One of the great successes is the BlackBerry—Research in Motion—developed by Peterborough native Jim Balsillie. In fact, I was at Jim's old high school on Friday night to attend their graduation. In one of the comments I made to the graduation class, I said to them that they're at the forefront of what they're going to see in terms of the green revolution. I said that in 20 years' time, when they go by the local car dealer, they'll see all those vehicles and trucks powered by battery, hydrogen or biofuels. That's where this economy is going, and that's why government has to be involved: to foster those initiatives that will allow us to really prosper in the new and changing economy that former President Bill Clinton has said will be worth at least \$1 trillion to the North American economy over the next number of years. These are the kinds of things we have been fostering, as a government, and the kinds of policies we want in place to nurture those opportunities to move them forward.

I want to talk about poverty for a moment. Poverty is something that has always been very close to my heart. During the 18 years that I had the privilege of serving as a city councillor in Peterborough, I was the chair of social services twice for six years. At that time, I had the opportunity to work closely with the agencies in the city of Peterborough and indeed on an individual basis to do what I could, in municipal government, to assist individuals who were really having some very difficult challenges.

Somebody asked why poverty wasn't mentioned in the finance minister's economic statement a week or so ago.

Indeed we are still on target. The Minister of Children and Youth Services will release a comprehensive policy for poverty reduction. We indicated publicly, through our consultations, that it would be released in mid-December. That's the course we're on, and when the paper gets released I'm looking forward to showing Ontario the comprehensive policy we want to put in place to deal with a really serious problem that I know all of us in this House want to do something about.

I heard my good friend from Beaches–East York talk about poverty; I know he has a great passion for this topic. But you've got to remember that the NDP government from 1990-95 froze ODSP rates in Ontario in 1993. Most people who take a step back and look at the spiral of poverty in Ontario go back to that date as the start of the spiral going downward. Coupled with the 21% cutback in ODSP and OW rates, it certainly led us to the position we're in today. Those are the facts. They froze them in 1993; I think everybody knows that. You can try to rewrite history if you want, but the facts are the facts.

We've introduced the Ontario child benefit program, which the late June Callwood said was the most progressive initiative introduced in the province of Ontario in the last 40 years. It's too bad that June is no longer with us, but certainly she was one of the most progressive and adamant voices to force governments to address the great concern about poverty. Those are the circumstances we're faced with. We've moved on minimum wage over the last number of years, and there's more to be done. I accept the fact that there are individuals across the province who believe we should move much more quickly. I accept that, and I respect that view.

Let me talk about municipalities for a little while. There's no question that the member from Beaches–East York is quite correct when he talks about property tax levels in the province of Ontario being among the highest. Why are they among the highest? Well, between 1995 and 2003, the government of the day embarked on a massive downloading program to Ontario's municipalities. They called it the "Who does what?" exercise; I always refer to it as the "Who got done in?" exercise. We know who got done in: It was municipalities in the province of Ontario that got done in.

The most unfortunate thing is that one of the most distinguished mayors of this great community of Toronto, the Honourable David Crombie, wrote a report for that government when they were in power and gave them a framework. What did Mr. Crombie suggest? He said that you never download income redistribution programs to the property tax, because the property tax is inherently a regressive tax. So what did Mr. Leach and his colleagues do? They downloaded income redistribution programs onto municipalities. That's exactly what happened. Social housing and all other social aspects were downloaded.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I hear the member saying, "That didn't happen." Ask any city councillor who served during that

period of time. Madam Speaker knows exactly that they got downloaded. What have we been doing as a government? We've been uploading some of those costs. We uploaded public health, on a cost-shared basis: 75% being funded by the province and 25% by the municipality. What has that meant for the city of Peterborough? The provincial contribution to public health in the city of Peterborough has risen from \$3 million to \$5 million. If they want to, I tell them, they can phone Brian Horton, the director of finance of the city of Peterborough, 742-7771, extension 248, and he'll verify the information that I've just provided. I'm sure Brian would like to talk to many of the members of the opposition. When he was director of finance, he tried to talk to them at that time about what the impact of downloading might be, but they didn't listen. That was a one-way conversation.

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What have we embarked upon? Well, we've embarked upon a systematic way, on a framework basis, to upload back to the province some of those things that were downloaded. We've certainly moved on public health. We've moved on the ODSP drug benefit. There's more that we will be doing. I look forward, at the end of this month, to Jim Watson, the very distinguished former mayor of Ottawa who is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, when he releases the framework plan that has been the subject of many deliberations. People have said we've extended the time frame. Exactly—we extended the time frame because we want to get it right. We don't want to rush in again to the famous “who got done in” committee. When the Conservatives were the government, they rushed into it, didn't listen to Crombie and just about killed municipalities in the province of Ontario. Again, if they want to talk to Brian Horton, it's 742-7771, extension 248, and he would be pleased to chat with them this afternoon.

We will be running a manageable deficit over the next little while, some \$500 million. It's really interesting because I was listening—let me get my notes here—to CBC News last night. Carole MacNeil was on, and who did Carole MacNeil interview? My good friend the federal finance minister, the Honourable Jim Flaherty. I want to quote the federal finance minister. He said, talking in the context that the federal government might run a deficit—I want the members opposite to listen very carefully—that he would not reduce transfers to destroy the social fabric in the country. He said that because there may be a prospect of running a deficit, he would not reduce the transfers to destroy the social fabric. This is exactly the path that we're following. We're saying that we're prepared to run a short-term, manageable deficit of some \$500 million so we don't ruin the social fabric of our transfer partners. Over the next little while we will slow the increase down, but we still respect our transfer partners, so they can depend on us to get those dollars.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You're cutting, but you respect them.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I hear my friend from Niagara Falls—Glanbrook. He was one of the members of the cabinet

during those eight long years when he was providing, I guess, expert advice on the “who got done in” committee, and I appreciate he's with us this afternoon to provide some insight.

It's interesting too that I hear now they've finally come clean on their \$5.6-billion deficit. For the longest time they were in denial, denial, denial that it actually existed. I heard the member a couple of days ago talk about how it was a circumstantial or consequential deficit because towards the end of that fiscal year of 2003—I agree that they had to deal with SARS, the blackout; there were a number of calamities that changed their fiscal situation. But that's not what they said during the campaign. Our good friend Madam Ecker—knowing full well, because she would have got briefs from her Ministry of Finance on a quarterly basis—kept saying through that whole campaign that the budget was indeed balanced. Isn't that interesting—\$5.6 billion. Even in late September, I remember, visiting my riding, that Madam Ecker said, “Guaranteed, everybody”—in late September, early October—as we went to the October 2003 election, that indeed the budget was balanced. Well, that doesn't square with what we're hearing from the opposition today. They're saying that there was this consequential deficit or situational deficit that added up to \$5.6 billion. I give them credit. As the priest in my church always says, “Confession is always good for the soul.” So it's good to see that they're embarking on that way.

Interestingly, I also heard the member from Simcoe North today talk about farm programs in the province of Quebec. The Minister of Agriculture is in the House this afternoon. We all know about the ASRA farm support program in the province of Quebec. We also know about the \$7-a-day daycare in the province of Quebec. Who pays for that? It's the people of Ontario through equalization.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Can I please ask the members not to throw things around the chamber? Thank you.

Can you please continue, member for Peterborough?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have a few seconds left to use up.

It's really interesting what we hear. They used to talk about the Soviet Union revising history every five years, because that's the cycle they used to work on.

I am pleased. I think we have a plan in place that will carry us through the next number of months. Indeed, most economists remark that this is changing by the day. So we have a program that will carry us through the next several months as we get into our next budget cycle.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's quite interesting to hear the member opposite talk about Jim Flaherty, our present finance minister from the federal government, and hoping that he won't cut the transfers back. But I want to remind the member opposite that the federal Liberal government, in 1995-96, when we were facing an \$11.2-billion deficit taking over government, cut back

federal transfers by \$1.5 billion in that year alone. The next year, he continued to cut Ontario's transfers by another \$1 billion. We didn't get back to the level of transfers we had in 1994-95 until 2000-01. The federal government took over \$12 billion out of the hide of the Ontario government at that time.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Paul Martin?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Paul Martin. The federal Liberals downloaded so much cost to the provincial government, yet we never hear the Liberals talk about the big download by the federal government, which far exceeded any transfer of responsibility from the province to any municipalities. Look at the numbers.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'll go on any debate and debate you, Mr. Leal. We'll talk about numbers, we'll talk about real numbers. And I can show you: They're in the public accounts of Ontario. The federal Liberals were disgraceful to the province of Ontario. They had no feelings at all.

I don't think Jim Flaherty and Stephen Harper are going to follow the example of the previous federal Liberal government, because they have more respect for the province of Ontario, notwithstanding the excessive spending of this present Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my good friend from Peterborough because he referred to me on several occasions. I don't want to be like a trout rising to the bait, so I'm not going to do it. But he did talk about the download, which is near and dear to my heart, the download for municipalities. There is no doubt whatsoever that the download has been disastrous in the province of Ontario to the 480 or so municipalities that are still here. The download has caused them to put off infrastructure spending, has caused them to, in a majority of cases, be forced to raise taxes. That taxation is, of course, regressive because it comes from property taxation.

What has also happened, and I think what my friend ought not to be taking credit for, is the download that they inherited, or the download that existed at the time the Liberals first took office. It was estimated at some \$3.2 billion. That download has actually grown today, and if one looks at the taxes today, because of the rise in welfare costs and the rise in other costs that the municipalities are paying, it's now estimated at \$3.9 billion to \$4 billion. So in spite of the fact that the Liberals have started to upload a few of the costs, the actual cost to the municipalities continues to go up.

If we are to make the municipalities solvent, if we are to make them responsible for those things that they are required to do, then we have to move rapidly to get rid of that \$4 billion that they ought not to be spending. To do that would require some considerable courage, to upload it, on the part of this government. It would require the courage to say, "These are our programs, and we are going to tax to pay for them," as opposed to allowing

other levels of government to be forced to tax and remit. I think that is morally unjustifiable.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is a pleasure to join this debate, and also to remark on what a cool and incisive analysis the member for Peterborough gave this particular issue. I think that one measure of it is the reaction of my colleagues from the Ontario republican party across. Sometimes you think they're way too right-wing even for George Bush.

We look at a former colleague of ours, Jim Flaherty, a gentleman I have always liked and respected, who is tiptoeing around the fact that he's going to run a deficit on behalf of the government of Canada. The members across have been talking about, "There was this circumstance," and, "There was that circumstance." Let's just compare apples with apples. Paul Martin's government, which Prime Minister Harper succeeded, handed over a \$13-billion surplus. The government that Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin succeeded in 1993, a Conservative government, was running a deficit of, let's see now, \$39 billion I think.

Some of my colleagues have talked about the Liberal government, and said, "You're tax-and-spend Liberals." I accept that. "Tax-and-spend Liberals" means that you live within your means. Let's look at what the Ontario PC Party/republican party proposes. They're borrow-and-spend Conservatives. I don't mind being a tax-and-spend Liberal, but I do object to being a borrow-and-spend Conservative like George Bush, who has spent his nation into—what is it?—\$10 trillion of debt. That's why this member gave such a good analysis.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to get into today's debate on the economy and this particular budget bill, Bill 114.

I notice that my good friend from Peterborough, as he often does, has brought forward his ideas and his version of reality. But let's bring him back. He wants to talk about what happened with Prime Minister Harper and Mr. Flaherty. I should remind him that between the years 1993 and 2006, the federal Liberals slashed and cut transfers to the provinces so that many provinces across this great country, including Ontario but also Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec, all complained about what the federal Liberals did at the time, including Paul DeVillers, who at the time was the national caucus chair and an Ontario MP, and likened the province of Ontario to a group of separatists. Allan Rock, the previous Attorney General and health minister federally, acknowledged that they cut transfers to the bone. Yet when massive money started to come in, thanks to Mike Harris, who lobbied the federal government at the time for more money for health, their health minister, David Caplan, said it was too much money. These people and their tactics are shameful, including trying to rebrand the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario as they have done today.

Today, after record surpluses in good times, they projected a \$5.6-billion surplus this year. We are projecting at least a \$500-million deficit, and we on this side think it's at least \$1.2 billion. Where did \$7 billion go? They have to answer for that, and if they don't have an answer for the \$7 billion of Ontario taxpayers' money they squandered, then we are in a really serious mess.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Member for Peterborough for a response.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly appreciate the insightful comments of my friends from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Beaches–East York, Mississauga–Streetsville and Nepean–Carleton.

The record is—people want to know where the money went. I can tell you where it went, in increased spending: \$225 million to build a state-of-the-art hospital in Peterborough, Ontario. That's where a portion of it went.

Where did some of the other money go? It went to establish five family health teams in the riding of Peterborough. We took 10,000 people off the wait list for primary care over the last five years. Where else did it go? Well, \$150 million went to support some of the farmers in my riding in Peterborough, and the opposition wouldn't support that initiative by the Minister of Agriculture.

More money went into establishing the risk management program in the agricultural sector for our grains and oilseeds. That's where some of the money went to. In fact, we've been trying for the last number of years—this Minister of Agriculture—to convince the government of Canada to come to the table to become a true partner of our grains and oilseeds farmers, to help them go through what may be adjustments down the road. What did they say? I know what the federal Minister of Agriculture said. We could have people die in this country, a “death by a thousand cuts—that's cold cuts.” Or the very distinguished member from Prince Edward Island, saying, “Well, if there's another death, I hope it's the member from”—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Point of order, the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I really think the member may want to withdraw his comments with respect to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): That's not a point of order. The member can bring whatever—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I'm sorry, it's not a point of order. The member can bring whatever debate he wishes, as long as it's within the rules of the House.

You can continue, and I'll give you a few extra seconds.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know those remarks were made by the federal Minister of Agriculture. They're in the public domain. Those were exact quotes from him, and he's never denied that he made those quotes. So I stand—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I would ask members to please remember that this is your

chamber. There's another hour or so of debate left at the very least, and I would expect to have some order in the House and respect for each other as members. Thank you.

Further debate? The member for Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Just a quick question for the Speaker who is in the chair: If we're unsatisfied with the responses to questions and comments from the member from Peterborough, can we ask for a late show?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you for the question, but you know very well that late shows are for question period. Continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: With these new rule changes that are popping up every other week, who knows what the new rules will be.

I always enjoy my friend from Peterborough's comments. Obviously, he's been reading the Joe Biden history collection and listening to his remarks. Of course, Mr. Biden, a vice-presidential candidate, famously a week or two ago said that when Black Monday struck and the stock market crashed in 1929, FDR went on television to calm the nation. Of course, television was not available across the nation at that point in time, and FDR, of course, was not the president of the United States at that point in time. It was Herbert Hoover.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No, no, that was Mr. Biden. Obviously, you've been reading his biography very closely.

The one I'd recommend to you, too, is Paul Martin's biography, which I guess is just out, about his battles with Mr. Chrétien over time. As my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills put it quite correctly, hopefully Mr. Martin will dedicate several chapters to how he really put the knives to the provincial governments when he was the finance minister by dramatically reducing transfer payments to not only the province of Ontario but to other provinces as well. It made it very challenging for governments across Canada at that time when Paul Martin chose to balance the books federally by dramatically decreasing transfers for health care and social services.

Thankfully, there have been some improvements lately. In fact, one of the items that is up in this fiscal year in the minister's economic statement from last week are the transfers from the federal government. The Stephen Harper government in Ottawa has increased transfers, as you know, to the province of Ontario and has helped, actually, the fiscal position of this current Liberal government's books, ironically.

Let me speak a little bit about that economic statement in the context of Bill 114 before the assembly here today. I'm still in a state of some disbelief—as I contemplated asking the Speaker about the member from Peterborough's comments, so maybe we'll defer that question till a little bit later on—about Dwight Duncan, the finance minister, coming to the Legislative Assembly, here in the chamber, just last Wednesday and announcing that the province of Ontario has gone back into deficit.

What was particularly shocking about this was that when the same minister rose in this assembly in March, some seven months ago, the books, he announced, were approximately \$6.4 billion in the black. There was approximately \$5.6 billion in additional revenue, greater than expenses, and the \$800-million, if I recall, reserve set aside. So there was a \$6.4-billion sum in the black, and for the minister now to come back and say that we are now \$500 million in the red is unbelievable. I'm still coming to grips with how the McGuinty government frittered away that substantial sum in this short period of time.

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What I hope to do in my comments on Bill 114 today is to contrast Ontario's position with other provinces like Quebec, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, which have come out recently with their own economic updates. What I'll show as well is that a startling omission in the finance minister's economic update was the absolute lack of any kind of job strategy. Certainly I think when you're back in your riding, Mr. Speaker, and my colleague is in Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the number one issue you'll hear about from your constituents is the state of the economy and the loss of well-paying jobs in the province of Ontario. No doubt, when seniors or any families are seeing the value of their investments and savings, seeing their RRSPs go through the wringer on this rollercoaster ride in the markets, they're very concerned about their economic affairs today and very concerned about their retirement tomorrow. Certainly those who are already in retirement and rely on a defined contribution pension plan have suffered real losses in their personal wealth and are making very difficult sacrifices today. There are seniors today, either at the Sobeys in Beamsville or the Fortinos in Stoney Creek, who are making real and difficult choices between filling up their grocery carts, paying their energy bills, and then coping with these massive assessment increases that they're getting in the mail this fall.

You would have thought, given those circumstances being experienced in every riding across the province, that the Minister of Finance would have brought forward some kind of economic plan, some kind of relief, some indication that he understands what families and seniors are going through in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario today, in 2008—and no doubt the Minister of Finance, hailing from Windsor, when Windsor and Essex county in many respects are in significant recessionary conditions—would have been attuned to what is happening in his own riding, let alone the challenges my constituents are facing today in western Niagara, upper Stoney Creek and the Glanbrook area. It's shocking.

In fact, earlier today, and I appreciate the assistance of the minister's office, we had a briefing with the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC, to help understand these massive assessments that are now hitting the pocketbooks of taxpayers in our ridings. My friend from Carleton-Mississippi Mills had some excellent questions for the MPAC staff, and I do thank MPAC staff for

taking the time to brief members of the PC caucus and our staff. What we learned in that was that Windsor and Essex county are actually the only areas of the province, I suspect, that are facing decreases in their assessments. So while folks in my riding will be getting assessment increases in the high double digits and some in the triple digit figures, depending on where they live, folks in Windsor are actually experiencing assessment losses. The unemployment rate in that community rivals the worst in all of Canada, and when you see the value of people's homes actually decreasing at a time of January 1, 2008, let alone the further decreases they've been experiencing this fall, you know that those communities are facing severe economic dislocation. That's why I was particularly shocked that the Minister of Finance had no new job strategy, no economic plan to help out working families and seniors facing these very difficult conditions.

I do believe that the vast majority of people in Ontario expect governments to make the same types of difficult but necessary decisions that they themselves make. At the end of month when you're trying to reconcile your bills with the paycheque that's coming in or your retirement savings, you need to make those difficult decisions, and I think people, particularly when they're paying higher taxes in the form of this new so-called health care tax, higher property taxes etc., expect the government to live within their means as well. Instead, we saw an approach by the McGuinty government in 2008 at odds with what families and small businesses are doing on a regular basis this year. The McGuinty government, instead of trying to spend prudently and make proper investments, went on a last-minute spending spree in the last fiscal year, a "spend, spend, spend" approach, fuelled by higher taxes, which meant they went from a \$6.4-billion position in the black to \$500 million in the red in a matter of months.

Let me also tell you why that's a significant number. Let's put this in perspective. If you look at the additional revenue that has come into the McGuinty government since it was elected in 2003, it's about \$28 billion, the largest component of which is higher taxes on the backs of middle-class families and seniors, predominantly, and businesses in the province. The second-largest increase would come from increased transfers from the federal government—so \$28 billion in additional revenue. Now, if you took the entire budgets of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and combined them, that actually falls short of \$28 billion. So the additional revenues are greater than the entire budgets of Manitoba and Saskatchewan put together. Despite that massive haul by the McGuinty government from middle-class families, seniors and businesses, they're still running this province into the red, which is incredible. I bet if you asked an average family watching today, or caught them in the street or inside a grocery store, they would be hard-pressed to say what they got in return for that massive spending increase.

So we find ourselves some \$500 million in deficit, potentially heading for a significantly worse deficit, as my colleague from Beaches-East York indicated in his remarks just a few minutes ago.

Let me also tell you why the \$500-million deficit was not necessary. When Minister Sorbara, the previous finance minister, was in that role, he regularly set aside a \$1-billion reserve fund. The reserve fund is something the finance minister sets aside in case the economy heads south, in case there's a major disaster like SARS, for example, that we sadly went through a number years ago, in order to cushion the blow so that if expenses increase or revenues fall, you've got a gap there, you've got a safety cushion, so to speak, so you don't fall into deficit. Minister Sorbara regularly had surpluses of \$1 billion, and in fact, Minister Sorbara announced in his last budget that surpluses would rise in future years, including this year, to \$1.5 billion. So taxpayers could reasonably expect that the McGuinty government would set aside a reserve fund of \$1.5 billion in case the economy turned south or there was some other disaster.

Secondly, governments tend to have a contingency fund. If a ministry is forced to overspend, if the Minister of Finance decides not to have them find it within their own ministry or from another ministry, it would tap into this contingency fund. In ways, it's a secondary cushion to the reserve fund. In the 2007-08 budget, the contingency funds were \$580 million for operating, \$175 million for capital. In the 2008-09 budget brought forward by Minister Duncan last March, the operating contingency fund was reduced by \$160 million to \$420 million.

Now, if times were good, if they were booming, if you saw bright sunshine on the horizon, you could say, well, maybe we don't need as big of a reserve fund or contingency fund or as big of a cushion, if you were confident that things were heading onward and upward. But I think, as you would agree, that we all knew, heading into 2008, that there were some significant storm clouds on the horizon. We saw what has happening in the United States and, because Ontario is an exporting economy, that we would be vulnerable to any downturn in the American economy. No doubt, a massive canary in the coal mine, so to speak, would be the 200,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs that have fled our province under the McGuinty government—sadly, far too many in my regions of Hamilton and Niagara.

We also knew, and the minister's own projections show, that the economy of Ontario was going to slow. He overestimated to what extent Ontario's economy would grow, but he still had what he described as a relatively cautious outlook at the time for economic growth.

So despite the fact that we knew we were heading for challenging times in the upcoming year, the Minister of Finance chose to dramatically reduce the safety cushion, dramatically reduce the reserve fund, and to significantly reduce the contingency fund. If he had kept at the level of caution that his predecessor, Mr. Sorbara, had indicated he would pursue as Minister of Finance, we would not be in a deficit today; that the increased reserve and contingency funds would more than make up for a shortfall that we've seen on the revenue side. Unfortunately, when I asked the Minister of Finance this today, I didn't get a

direct answer. I don't know what his thinking was back in March of this year, 2008—when he knew that tough times were ahead, when he indicated in his budget and his budget speech there were challenging times ahead—that he would choose to cut the safety cushion, so to speak; that he would choose to reduce the reserve and the contingency funds and spend that money. As a result, because he threw good caution to the wind, we are much more vulnerable to changes in the American economy and we've found ourselves \$500 million in deficit as of October 2008.

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To make matters worse, not only was it imprudent of the Minister of Finance to reduce our reserve and contingency funds heading into a difficult year—and I hope maybe one of my colleagues opposite will have an explanation and defend the wisdom behind that reduction, but I fail to see it. I don't think there will be an explanation as to why it was, in the minister's view, a good thing to reduce that margin of safety in the reserve and contingency funds.

But to make matters worse, when the year began, the McGuinty government could not take its foot off the accelerator and continued to spend, spend, spend. In fact, in the first and second quarters of this year they had spent an additional \$325 million in unbudgeted spending. You would think that if you knew the economy was heading downward, if you saw what was happening in the States and other countries, you would say to your cabinet colleagues, "If you have additional spending, try to find it within your own ministry; and if you can't, try to find it in another ministry, because we cannot have unbudgeted spending." Sadly, whether due to lack of foresight or lack of any kind of planning, the finance minister and the McGuinty government proceeded with some \$325 million in unbudgeted spending increases.

Let me give you some examples. The Board of Internal Economy was increased by \$22.4 million this fiscal year. That was in the first quarter of this year. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, \$11.6 million; executive offices, \$1.1 million; the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services was up in spending; and in the second quarter, \$187.5 million in the Ministry of Education for school board expenses. I understand that is related to the collective bargaining agreement, which increased teachers' salaries by 3% a year over four years, for a 12% increase. Again, that was unbudgeted spending. That was not part of the minister's forecast as recently as March. There was a \$100-million increase in OHIP billing, the Ministry of Health; \$7.1 million for OMERS. Anyway, it all adds up to approximately \$325 million in unbudgeted spending only halfway through the year.

If you combine those two factors, between the reserve funds being cut and the dramatic unbudgeted spending—dramatic in that we knew we were heading for some fiscal challenges—the provincial books would actually be in the black this year, not \$500 million into deficit, as the minister announced just last week.

I know my colleague from Peterborough had talked about where all this spending went. He had suggested that the Peterborough hospital was a beneficiary of this increase in operating funds. The reality, though, is that because of the accounting changes that have been made, most of the capital funds are simply financed through an increase in provincial debt and, as I indicated when I responded to the Minister of Finance's economic statement, the debt increase in the McGuinty government has been huge. I think I calculated it at the time to be approximately \$31 billion in additional debt, which worked out to a significant increase for every household in the province of Ontario.

Here are some of the numbers, Madam Speaker, just for your information. As of September 30, 2008, the total debt in Ontario has continued to climb all the way to \$172 billion. That's basically \$13,500 in debt for every woman, man and child in the province of Ontario or \$38,000 for every household. Despite the fact that these record revenues were coming in, and despite the fact that federal transfers had increased, the McGuinty government still went on a borrowing spree and has increased the total debt per household by \$8,705.35.

Now, here's the problem with deficits and here's the problem with borrowing: You've got to pay that back. If you want to take out a loan, you go to the bank and take out the loan—or the credit union—and then you have to pay down that debt and you have to pay down the interest on it. Typically, any government would be the same. To use that analogy, now, because of the \$500 million and the increased debt, the government of Ontario has to go and borrow it either domestically through the banks, or internationally, and then taxpayers will have to finance that down the road through increased taxes to pay down the debt and the interest that goes along with it.

Secondly, when you—as this government does—sort of shrug and pass on a deficit, what you do is leave government spending unchallenged. What a deficit should motivate is a line-by-line review, through each ministry, of how those dollars are spent. Are they getting the best bang for the buck? Are there more efficient ways of delivering programs? Have some programs outlived their usefulness? Is there a better way of doing it? Or are two ministries doing basically the same thing and doubling the expenses for a single purpose? There seems to be a complete failure of the McGuinty government to review their \$97 billion or so in spending, to try to find ways to find savings, and \$500 million on a nearly \$100-billion budget works out to one half cent on one dollar. I think that almost everybody watching this evening would agree that there's more waste in government spending than simply one half of one cent on every dollar. So, by just allowing for a deficit to pass without any significant review, you allow bad spending habits to proceed and then become part of an ongoing reckless spending reputation of the McGuinty government.

A third thing is that once you start getting into deficits, once you get on that deficit treadmill, it's awfully hard to get off. There are hundreds of billions of dollars, and as I said, in the province of Ontario, \$172 billion because

governments, particularly through the 1970s, 1980s and into the early to mid-1990s, kept running deficit after deficit and piling up that debt, because they wanted to leave the difficult and necessary decisions to future generations. One of the central problems in the McGuinty government is that they're trying to be all things to all people, spending in every area without setting real priorities. What we saw last week in the economic statement was the lack of any kind of leadership or courage to make the difficult but necessary decisions to get the province back into a balanced or a surplus position.

There are a number of things I wanted to cover, in addition, in tonight's discussion. Let's look at some of the alternatives. All the Canadian provinces deal with the same dollar. All Canadian provinces trade with the States, China and other countries, and are being impacted by state of those economies. All provinces face the same price of oil. All provinces face the same repercussions from their citizens' investments in the stock markets. But Ontario now stands, after Wednesday's bad news, along with Prince Edward Island as the only province in all of Canada to be in deficit. The other Premiers have looked at their financial situations, facing the same challenges and have made decisions to try to stimulate their economies, to try to help create jobs in their provinces, as opposed to blithely moving forward with the same failed economic plan and going back into deficit.

I say to my friend from Ottawa-Orléans, if the province had spent at a rate of inflation plus population growth, a relatively generous rate of increased spending—so, the rate of inflation in the economy plus the population growth in the province of Ontario from the time they were in office—they would actually have had \$7 billion left over. In other words, they spent \$7 billion more than they would have if they had targeted spending at inflation plus population growth—a very reasonable figure. That would have meant, like the other provinces, that they had \$7 billion of room to reduce the tax burden on families and on seniors, and to reduce the tax burden on small businesses, or all businesses, to help make Ontario a friendly environment for investment. They could have used \$7 billion to invest in key infrastructure like the mid-peninsula corridor, which would help communities in Hamilton and Niagara attract more jobs. But instead it was all basically put into runaway program spending—by the way, a 50% increase in program spending under the McGuinty government. I bet if you asked the average person tonight who's trying to pay for the grocery bill at their local Sobeys, they would be hard pressed to say what they had seen as a result of that massive spending.

1700

So the province of Saskatchewan is facing some of the same challenges as Ontario. Premier Brad Wall tapped into his government's estimated \$3-billion surplus but had planned to raise the basic personal and spousal amounts for tax exemption by \$4,000 each and to hike the child tax credit by \$2,000. Not only did Premier Wall bring forward those tax reductions, but he also made them retroactive for all of 2008, bringing savings of more

than \$1,300 a year for a typical family with two children. It also means, quite happily, that 80,000 low-income taxpayers will no longer pay any provincial income tax at all in Saskatchewan.

My friend from Beaches–East York talked about the importance of a poverty plan, which has sort of gone AWOL under the McGuinty government, and no doubt taking 80,000 low-income taxpayers off the tax rolls would be an important part of any poverty reduction program, along with the job creation plan that was missing from the McGuinty government's announcements of last week.

In addition to the tax cuts, Saskatchewan is putting more money into infrastructure and putting \$1 billion from its rainy-day Growth and Financial Security Fund into paying down provincial debt. The government has said it also plans to reduce the education portion of property taxes and to increase the support program for low-income seniors.

What a contrast. We've got two provinces facing the same international challenges. The province of Ontario, because of Dalton McGuinty's high taxes, his runaway spending, his higher rates for hydro, his increased red tape, was weakened and had great challenges in fending off these international forces. Secondly, because of its rapid spending increases, it did not have the funds set aside to stimulate the economy like Saskatchewan has. Ontario should have had \$7 billion if they had spent at that rate; in fact, now, because Dalton McGuinty overspent, we're \$500 million in the red.

The Toronto Sun on October 23 juxtaposed the two plans: "With Ontario projecting a \$500-million deficit ... Saskatchewan was bucking the trend with tax cuts and a budget surplus."

From a Canadian Press story the same day: "Experts say Saskatchewan, long considered an economic backwater, will be among the strongest provincial performers, outstripping the former manufacturing powerhouse of Ontario and Alberta's once red-hot oil patch."

A couple of provinces over, British Columbia, again facing some very significant challenges, as we have; very dependent on the forestry sector as well. Its trade toward Asia will be diminished because of the state of some of the economies it would trade with. Instead of running a deficit, instead of just injecting more money, without setting priorities, into program spending, Premier Gordon Campbell brought forward a 10-point plan. Again, it may not have been a 10-point plan I'd expect from McGuinty, but I would have expected something from the Premier and his finance minister as part of a jobs and economic development strategy in their economic statement.

Gordon Campbell brought forward a 10-point plan. Here are a couple of the items: an unlimited deposit insurance for deposits in credit unions, an accelerated retroactive personal income tax cut, a school property tax rebate for industry, accelerated tax relief for small business, and accelerated public infrastructure investment. That works out to about \$201 million in British Columbia for this year, not including capital spending, without sliding into a deficit.

The Globe and Mail, October 23, said, "Premier Gordon Campbell vowed to keep British Columbia a 'deficit-free zone' even as he outlined a plan last night to cut taxes and boost spending in response to a slowing economy." Premier Campbell himself said in the Toronto Star, "We will continue to live within our means and within our taxpayers' ability to pay."

Some of the items I had mentioned, I'll go into in a bit more detail. The unlimited deposit insurance for deposits to credit unions: Now BC will come into line with Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI and New Brunswick; Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland cover up to \$250,000. So Ontario's now at the back of pack, covering only up to \$100,000 per registered account in credit unions. BC is doing unlimited deposit insurance as part of Premier Campbell's 10-point plan.

Interesting too is a new pension opportunity. Small businesses often have great difficulty setting aside money for their own pensions, let alone for their employees. Based on the joint expert panel on pension standards that BC did with Alberta, they're bringing forward a private sector pension opportunity: a defined contribution plan to help self-employed people, and employers and employees who don't have a pension plan, which would certainly be an interesting opportunity for us to investigate here in Ontario.

I mentioned the accelerated retroactive personal tax cut, which British Columbia is carrying through with, and accelerating tax relief for small businesses. Interestingly, "Double commission paid to business for PST and HRT collection: The province will double the commission it pays business for collecting the provincial sales tax and hotel room tax." That adds up to about 1,200 bucks to a business's bottom line over the three years of the program.

There are some changes in ferry fares, which, aside from the Chi-Cheemaun and one or two others, wouldn't be as relevant to the province of Ontario. Importantly, "The province will re-evaluate spending priorities and focus on scaling back unbudgeted increases," while here, in the economic statement, as I mentioned, there's some \$325 million of unbudgeted spending in the first two quarters of the year alone.

Last, I want to mention Quebec: very manufacturing based, as is the province of Ontario, and trade based. I believe Quebec will come up with an economic update later this week. However, in its recent budget 2008-09, Quebec brought forward immediate elimination of the capital tax for all manufacturing companies, a new investment tax credit for the purchase of manufacturing and processing equipment—the rate varies depending on what part of the province they're from—a regional economic development program for municipalities that have been hard hit, and a tax credit for new information technology companies corresponding to 30% of the salaries for jobs related to innovative activities.

Sadly and bizarrely, while other provinces that are facing the same international economic circumstances have found ways to try to stimulate their economies, have found ways to try to help create jobs in their provinces—

well-paying jobs to replace lost manufacturing jobs—have found ways to help seniors and middle-class families make ends meet under these very challenging economic circumstances, and have found ways to help low-income individuals and families get ahead under some very difficult circumstances, Ontario stands alone as a province that is going in the opposite direction with high taxes, runaway spending and no new ideas in the economic statement tabled this past week. I do hope we will see the finance minister and the Premier come forward with some new ideas in the time ahead, because that response was sadly lacking and sadly out of touch with the realities faced by Ontario families today. I look forward to the comments from my colleagues.

I want to ask a question as well, because I have not had a chance to be fully briefed on this bill. Schedule F of Bill 114 amends the Executive Council Act. When they were in opposition, Dalton McGuinty and a number of his ministers made it a regular question to ask about absences of ministers from question period, and they brought forward legislation to guarantee that ministers would be here for a certain number of question periods. It appears that now they're safely past the recent election, they're planning on watering this down:

“Subsection 7(2) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

“(2) A day on which a minister is absent from the chamber is not counted as an absence for the purpose of this section if the Premier is of the opinion that the absence is justified because of,

“(a) illness, bereavement, a religious holiday or some similar reason;” understandable, “or

“(b) international travel related to trade or economic development.”

Mr. Kim Craiton: That's good.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My friend says, “That's good.” Holy cats, you could drive a Mack truck or a 747 carrying all the ministers on the latest junket through clause 7(2)(b) of schedule F. I expect that through this loophole we'll now see maybe not my friend the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities but other ministers travelling with large groups in tow. Premier McGuinty, by way of example, is noted among the press as somebody who carries with him the largest group of staffers of any Premier when he travels. I fear that if schedule F does pass, the Premier will be granting a blank cheque to his ministers to go on junkets across the world at a time when families and seniors are paying higher taxes, are getting whacked by massive assessment increases, are having difficulty making ends meet and seeing the value of their savings and investments depleted in the stock markets. And all of a sudden, Dalton McGuinty is going to send his ministers on an international travelling medley in the time ahead.

I hope that schedule F is amended when we have a chance to look at this bill. I'll leave it at that and look forward to the comments of my colleagues.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to my good friend from Niagara West–Glanbrook. He and I often share stages together as the finance critic for the two opposition parties and I always listen with great interest to what he has to say.

For the first time today, though, I finally heard something on poverty from the Conservative Party. I have not heard in a long, long time any questions asked in the House or statements made on the issue of poverty, so I was very keen to listen. He did talk about something—an idea which I had not heard explored here before—and that is, simply, income tax cuts for the poor. I have not heard that and it was refreshing to hear that there is this idea being floated around to remove some 80,000 people off the tax rolls. I'm not convinced that that is much of an answer because I'm not sure how much income tax is being paid or, if you're reducing the lowest-paid people, how much money, in fact, they are actually going to be saved or they are actually going to save apiece. But it is refreshing to hear that there is some empathy being considered here and that they do have a program when it comes to the poor.

He went on to talk about other provinces and what they're doing. I think that this is a little bit of a dangerous game, because each province has their own strengths and weaknesses and each province has their own expectations from their communities. So it is often difficult to say—if British Columbia is able to do something that Manitoba is not or that Newfoundland is or is not, and juxtapose that with Ontario—that a program that works elsewhere will work here. Having said that, I think we need to pay some attention to what he had to say in terms of new programs; it's not so much the spending, but it's the new programs. Where are they able to institute new programs? And can we learn anything from them? I would hope the government takes a good look at what he had to say on those issues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: The member for Niagara West–Glanbrook was part of that \$5.6-billion deficit that we were left with in 2003. That was in good times, and now he's concerned about a \$500-million deficit.

We have the Bush-type thinking—the US took that good Clinton surplus, moving ahead for years, and they've almost bankrupted the country. Of course, it impacts us severely, and we have to take the steps we're taking. The right-wing conservative deregulations of the US, as worshiped by Harper and Harris and Hudak—this is what has got us into trouble, with sub-prime mortgages that collapsed the whole financial market in the US and across the world. And then we have you standing up here and you're talking about taking steps that we're taking as a government to try to buttress ourselves against that.

I'm pleased that our federal Liberals in the 1990s got rid of that I think \$39-billion annual deficit, \$40-billion annual deficit, and then they got the country on the right footings, and they didn't deregulate our banks like they did in the US—like the right-wing thinkers let the money

markets go where they wish and not have any regulations. We haven't done that. We've got a good, strong banking system here. But because 80% of our goods go to the US, of course, we have to take steps, and we're taking those steps. Those are the five points in the plan: the training; the infrastructure, which was so lacking in the 1990s, which has been brought back since 2003 with this government to get it going again; research and innovation that should be—where's the federal money for research and innovation? It's almost not there. It should be there. We're putting it in. Lowering business costs and all the work that the small business minister has done in getting rid of all those rules etc. We have helped manufacturing and so—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

Mr. Phil McNeely: —I really think that you have to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook's excellent speech. He has raised some really excellent examples from other jurisdictions.

But I don't want us to lose track of why we are talking about a deficit. I want to highlight some examples for the chamber about some ways that perhaps the McGuinty Liberals could have prudently chosen a different route. Some of the spending that has gone on in the last number of years:

—\$2.3 million spent on the opening gala of Caesar's Windsor—is that prudent?

—\$8 million for the next two years to conduct research on new tourism markets, also called the Sorbara retirement tour—is that prudent?

—\$3.5 million spent by the Ministry of Education on hotel and conference facilities;

—\$6 million to remove the “C” from the OLG, Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.;

—\$20 million to quietly give raises to appointees to government agencies and boards;

—\$2 million for an inaccurate, partisan advertisement about health care;

—\$91 million to fire nurses;

—\$90 million to close or consolidate community care access centres.

I could go on, but I think the point is that for a government that espouses prudence in their decision-making, the proof is in the pudding, and the pudding is that there are lots of decisions that have been made by this McGuinty Liberal government and the ministers within it that show there is no prudence happening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, for the applause.

I think this is my first opportunity ever to respond to the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, so I'm taking this opportunity to do so.

I was listening quite intently, as was my friend from Beaches–East York, to what the member had to say about this particular budget bill. He went into an extensive narrative about comparing Ontario with other provinces, but what he neglected to talk about was how diverse our economies are in this country; that each province is different and each province's economy is different. You really cannot take the economy in Saskatchewan, Quebec or British Columbia and then compare it to Ontario and say, “Look, things are not working.”

While he was quite eloquently talking about all the different tax cuts that have been offered in other provinces, he forgot to mention the tax cuts we have instilled here in Ontario under the McGuinty government: the elimination of capital tax for all manufacturing and resource sector industries, retroactive to January 1, 2007; the elimination of capital tax on other businesses, which will be completed by 2010. What about the impact on those businesses of bringing business costs down? It's something which has been hailed and congratulated by all economists across the province, saying that this is the kind of tax cut we need to bring in. We have to keep in mind that we are bringing in prudent tax cuts to ensure that our businesses prosper.

As to his comments about schedule F: On the one hand, the opposition laments the fact that we're not doing enough to create jobs, but on the other hand, when we want the tools, the capacity to create those jobs by making sure that we bring investors from abroad to Ontario, that's not good enough.

We can't just sit here in a globalized economy and expect that jobs will come, that the investors will come to Ontario. We have to make sure that we go out there and market Ontario, the great potential, the great skill that exists in this province, to ensure that foreign investors—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: —choose Ontario as the place for investment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. To the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook for a response.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thanks to my colleagues all, and particularly to the member from Dufferin–Caledon, who probably could have gone on for an hour herself with all the examples of wasteful Liberal spending. I bet that none of the members here went to the \$2.1-million, black-tie gala at the opening of the Windsor casino, but—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I wasn't invited.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No, I don't think we were invited. I think Liberal members and lobbyists and hangers-on probably were around the roulette table that evening.

To my two colleagues from Ottawa, I gave three examples of three provinces. Sure, every province is different; that's why I gave three different types of prov-

inces: to indicate that despite the various different economies—Quebec would be different from BC, which would be different from Saskatchewan—all have found ways to bring forward a job-creation plan and some plan to try to bring relief to hard-pressed families and seniors in their provinces. Ontario stands alone in not bringing forward any kind of vision or any kind of a plan to help create jobs in this province or, secondly, to bring relief to those families. By way of illustration, three different provinces, three moving in one direction and Ontario stands alone at standing pat, running a deficit and seeing jobs flee.

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Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleagues in the Liberal benches are also crying out, “What about our tax cuts?” They’re trying to claim credit for taxes. The reality is that you increased taxes, in the largest tax increase in the history of this province, on the backs of seniors, on the backs of families, and on the backs of small and large businesses. And then other tax reductions were delayed. The capital tax should have been gone some time ago. It’s still around because the McGuinty government postponed those tax cuts. So the Liberals trying to pat themselves on the back for reducing taxes is like a bank robber who had just robbed a bank going back to the bank and trying to make a deposit, wondering why they’re not at all grateful.

You increased taxes through the roof. They’re among the highest taxes now in all of North America, and we have to come down further to help create jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s a pleasure to rise and speak. Unfortunately, I was in committee so I didn’t hear all of the pearls of wisdom from my colleagues in the House—except for some, and I heard those from the member from Ottawa Centre before I had to go down to sit in committee. So I’ll respond, in part, to him.

What I heard was a pretty glowing description of life in the economy of Ontario. It seemed almost utopic. Quite frankly, that is not the reality that the vast majority of Ontarians are experiencing. We hear, of course, from our colleagues across the floor that we are a small province in a big world that is experiencing great turbulence on the economic front. I was down with my husband at a conference—a very interesting one—for eastern seaboard legislators. We had state reps from a number of different states, as well as MPPs and MLAs from a number of different provinces. We listened there to a Democratic pollster, and he said that something quite remarkable had happened in the psyche of Americans. He said that for the first time in the history of polling in the United States, this generation of voters expects that their children will be worse off than they are. This is not the American dream, and it’s not the Canadian dream, either. The hope here—and we are nations of immigrants—is that you work hard and your children do better than you, that they don’t do worse than you.

But it doesn’t take a historian to experience what many in this House have experienced with their children, and that is exactly what the pollster found out: that it’s more difficult for our young people now than it was for us, and that in fact it was more difficult for us than it was for our parents. We all remember back to the days—and of course this is not true of everyone, but it certainly was true of more—that on one salary you could own a home, own a car and, for the very lucky, own a cottage. I would put out to the colleagues of this House that now it takes at least two salaries, if you’re very lucky, to consider buying a house and a car, and it’s only for the very rich that cottages are even a possibility. So that’s a change in one lifetime, and now we’re seeing that change accelerate.

It’s really interesting for the proponents of capitalism, by which we in the New Democratic Party are surrounded in this House, to see a free market economy and the free market touted as being the answer to all problems, and then the likes of a Bush coming up with socialist measures when the free market fails—which it is. Let us make no doubt about it, the free market is failing. It is failing around the world. But it’s an interesting sort of socialism that’s brought in. It’s a socialism for the rich only. If you’re poor and you don’t have any capital, it’s capitalism for you, but if you’re a bank, if you’re a wealthy corporation, if you’re part of the Fortune 500 and you run into some financial difficulties, then the government’s there to bail you out. We’ve seen this in the States, and it’s been dramatic.

So certainly as a social democrat, it doesn’t warm my heart; it’s a tragedy. But I look to Europe. Again, they’re experiencing troubles there, but certainly the way the troubles are trickling down to those who are working is a little bit less traumatic than we’re seeing here in the States with the lack of social services.

My husband and I went to Sweden. It’s fascinating to see this trading country, a country of only nine million people—we have 13 million, more or less, in Ontario—which has a vibrant economy: Sony Ericsson, Ikea, H&M, Volvo. They have put into place some of the policies that we in the New Democratic Party are recommending that the McGuinty government put into place, things like “Buy Ontario.” Guess what? When you go to Sweden, about every third or fourth person is driving a Volvo. There’s a reason for that. They have policies to “Buy Swedish” for their citizens. They have policies in place that encourage research and development in their homegrown industries, trading etc., and, of course, consuming their own products. That’s one of the recommendations that we’ve put forward, one of the recommendations this government has not picked up.

We’ve put forward a recommendation for less expensive hydro rates—again, another policy that this government has not picked up. We’ve put forward, as New Democrats, a policy to cushion those who live in poverty and to raise them out of poverty. And not all of the recommendations that we’ve put forward cost tax dollars. This is why it’s so troubling on this side of the

floor to New Democrats to see the government sit on its hands and do nothing about poverty, despite all the promises, when in fact many of the suggestions we've made wouldn't cost a tax dime: suggestions like raising the minimum wage to a living wage—\$10.25. It was the "\$10 minimum wage" campaign; it's now the \$10.25 wage campaign, indexed to inflation. Why? Because automatically, de facto that would raise about a million Ontarians out of poverty because they would be making a minimum wage above the poverty line. It wouldn't cost a tax dime and it wouldn't cost small business, much as we hear that complaint. In fact, as a small business critic, I can tell you that only about 29% of the jobs paying minimum wage come from small business. The vast majority of jobs paying minimum wage are big-business jobs; they're jobs at Wal-Mart, they're jobs at McDonald's, they're jobs for multinational firms where the profits, quite frankly, go out of this country and don't stay here. Asking for a living wage would force those multinational companies to actually invest in their communities in a reasonable, ethical and compassionate way, and that is to pay a living wage. Again, it wouldn't cost a dime.

What else could this government do? First of all, it could actually give some weight to employment standards legislation; that is, it could enforce employment standards legislation. We do not have employment standards in the province of Ontario because we do not enforce employment standards in the province of Ontario. Millions and millions of dollars of unpaid wages go uncollected, and who does not collect those wages? It's not the middle class; it's not the wealthy. Predominantly, it's those who are immigrants, those at the lower end of the earning spectrum, who aren't aware of their rights, who don't have time to hire a lawyer, who don't know the process or can't access the process. Those are the people who are not collecting the unpaid wages, and that is an absolute travesty of justice.

Certainly no inspection is happening. I've called for, in a motion, that 25% of all places of employment be blitzed, be inspected, and that when the egregious and outrageous examples of employment standards breaches are discovered, they be given more than a slap on the wrist; that they actually be fined something meaningful and that their company names be posted so people know who are exploiting virtually slave labour in some instances—those employees out there.

Precarious employment now represents 37% of all jobs in Ontario. Precarious employment: That's temporary employment, part-time employment, contract employment. Yet this government has done nothing about temporary agencies. It can't even bring itself to license them. We all know that a licence is just a piece of paper on a wall, never mind giving teeth to a licensing process, never mind cracking down on those who exploit those who work at the lowest-paid jobs in the province.

So again, looking at the employment standards, looking at temporary agencies, looking at the whole area of contract, temporary, seasonal work that doesn't pay a living wage.

1730

This government boasts about creating jobs, and quite frankly, that's sad. It's tragic because we know 230,000 jobs have been lost in this province. Many of those jobs were actually good, living-wage jobs, manufacturing jobs, some of them union jobs. Those jobs are lost, and they're replaced with what? I'd say they're replaced not with living-wage jobs, they're replaced with part-time, contract, temporary, call centre McJobs. That's what's replaced them. So to boast that there's an increase in employment is a sad commentary when you actually look at the widening gap in Ontario between the wealthy and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. The changing face of poverty in this province is a working face. It is not a person who is on social assistance. It's a working face. It's somebody who is working full time and still earning less than is required to feed their children, to put education on the table, to pay the rent or to even hope one day of buying a property. It's a working face, the face poverty.

Of course, my colleague from Beaches—East York has spoken eloquently and often about the plight of those on social assistance. We know that they're making far less than they were almost 20 years ago in real dollars. We know that somebody on ODSP who cannot work—that's why they're on disability—is now being forced to live below the poverty line. Now, on any ethical plane, for any scale of compassion, surely across the way one has to admit that someone who cannot work should not be condemned to live in poverty by a province still as wealthy, in a worldwide sense, as Ontario. This is simply outrageous. It's simply morally and ethically unacceptable.

So we have poverty for those who live on social assistance, we have poverty for those who work, and we have an increasing number of those who live in poverty. If we think it won't touch us, then stand back, because it will. There was a story in the *Globe* that really hit home to me. It hit home to me because it described not only those on social assistance, not only those, many of whom I have as my constituents, who work at minimum wage, who work two or three jobs just to get by, but it began to describe what we would call the middle class in the province of Ontario. It was the story of a man in Windsor who had lost his good CAW job; it was a good union job that paid a middle class salary. This poor man had to renegotiate his mortgage. Most of us are aware that most banks and mortgage lenders will not mortgage a house to more than 80% of its value. Well, guess what happened to this poor individual? House values, because of dropping real estate values, particularly in the hard-hit community of Windsor, were dropping. So his house value had dropped, and his mortgage, which he had been trying to live on because he had lost his job, was now more than 80% of the value of his house. So no lending institution would lend him the money. This is an individual who is going to lose his house.

Now I ask you to look at your sons and daughters; many of us have grown sons and daughters in this House,

many of us know young people who are certainly mortgaged to within 80% of the value of their house. It's difficult to buy property in a city the size of Toronto, or in many of our urban centres across Ontario, where you're not mortgaged to 80% of the value of your property. I ask you to imagine, if that property dips in value—all it has to dip is 20% and your mortgage comes due, and you have to renegotiate—the state that you will be in, the situation you will find yourself in. We're not so different from our neighbours to the south. And what does this government do in response to this? The answer is not much, precious little, words. We get words. We get a resolution that says they acknowledge the problem. We get words, and we get the suggestion that we're going to move into a deficit. We don't have an active strategy by which jobs will be created, by which that poor gentleman in Windsor is going to be able to turn his life around.

We have a job training program where just over 1,000 people have taken up the program, whereas we have 230,000 who have lost their jobs. For somebody in their fifties it's going to be difficult to retrain if they have come from a middle-class income, a good union job, to do something that will pay them the same amount of money. What happens when their mortgages come due?

My colleague from Beaches–East York has also done some really important work on property taxes. I know that every member here is getting calls from their constituents about their new MPAC assessments. I have seniors in my riding who are in danger of losing their house just because of their increase in taxes. They have paid their houses off completely, but they are living on fixed incomes. Guess what's happening to fixed incomes? If you're not lucky enough to have a pension, and even if you are, depending on how those funds are invested, if you have retired on anything that has anything to do with the stock market, then you are in trouble indeed. Then, just as you're reeling from that blow, your MPAC assessment comes in to tell you that you're going to be paying more in taxes. You can't afford it. What are our seniors going to do?

So we have two groups of people who are hardest hit. We have our seniors on fixed incomes on the one hand; we have our young people on the other hand who are just trying to get started.

Of course, I think of my colleague from Trinity–Spadina and the work that he has done around education. We now have the highest level of student debt in the country. This is again absolutely unacceptable. So the same couple that is going to be mortgaged to 80% of their first property, their first home, is going to also be carrying a huge student debt, not only into their twenties but into their thirties, and most of them into their forties, before they have paid it off—\$28,000 to \$30,000.

Again, we're saddling those who can afford it the least with the brunt of what is going to be, most experts agree, a recession. So here we're looking at a situation in which the government needs to act, and we have a government that isn't acting, a government that, just like George Bush, depends on the market, hopes for the market, prays

for the market to recoup, recover, do something, because they're not. They're not going to intervene, they're not going to do anything substantive to create new jobs in a meaningful way—no jobs commissioner over there, no investment tax credit, of course, for manufacturers the way we proposed, no tax-free measures even for those who are hardest hit and who are the working poor, no living wage, no increased ODSP rates, no housing policy.

I heard a member speak about \$100 million into housing. Well, let us be very clear: Those are not Ontario dollars. This is a government that hasn't even spent the federal dollars that they have received on housing. This is a government with no housing policy. Again, who will that hurt the most? Not those who are boomers among us, not those who have good jobs among us, but those who are the working poor, those seniors. That's who it is going to hurt the most—the young and the older.

I just have a couple of minutes left. As small business critic, I have to say that small business is, as we all know, the major employer in this province, and small business is getting no breaks at all from this government. Small business has been asking over and over again for reform of the business education tax across the province, and has yet to see any meaningful reform that's really going to put money into their pockets. Certainly, 416 businesses are paying way more, proportionately, than 905 businesses. They're asking for that. There's no such thing as anything like controls on commercial rents; hence, we see gouging going on for many small retailers. There is much that small business needs from this government, and small business gets extremely little, if anything at all—a nod, but nothing real.

Meanwhile, we have the minister of somewhere else rushing off to China, rushing off to India, looking to create—what?—jobs in a country that my son has taught English in and said, “You know, really they're known for one thing, in terms of their labour market in China, and that's sweatshops.” How is travelling to China going to provide meaningful union jobs for Ontarians? It may make one or two import-export firms some money, but it's not going to help those 230,000 people who have lost their jobs, and neither will travelling to India, which is where a number our jobs have been outsourced already in the financial markets.

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Just to sum up, what do we need? We need action. Quite frankly, we need drastic action. We need a government that's a “do” government, not a government that's a “watch and wait and see” government. We've got a government over here that's “wait and see and do nothing.” On behalf of the 230,000, on behalf of all our children, our young people who are starting out, our seniors who are hoping for a comfortable retirement, I say, “You're going to have to wait and see, because this is not a government that's going to deliver for you.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this discussion as well. I'm hearing two ex-

treme points of view. One is a tax-and-spend strategy that they feel is best at this point in time during this economic downturn. The other is a slash-and-burn strategy. Frankly, what I see that we need now more than ever is a sober strategy that's sustainable over time, and that allows us to take advantage of the fact that we have a lower debt-to-GDP ratio than we've had in a long time.

I'm looking at a situation here where we want our government to be fiscally responsible and socially conscious: conscious about issues like poverty, and conscious about the need for us to maintain a strategy around innovation so that we can continue to invest, in incubating some of our businesses to succeed. Another one is around infrastructure. We have in this province the largest infrastructure build in its history. And it's about partnering with businesses, big and small.

The government, and Ontario—for that matter even Canada nationwide—has established, over time, strong foundations and strong fundamentals to enable us to weather this storm. I believe that Ontario is poised, better than ever, to weather this storm, because we've taken those proper precautions over time. I can go over the bill on a couple of items, but I want to talk about issues around helping seniors through the property tax credits, as well as granny flats enabling us to house those in need of accommodation. We've already spoken about enabling big and small businesses to take advantage of capital tax credits, and innovation tax credits are another big portion of this amended bill. With that, I'd say we should continue to support the strategy of this budget.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'd just like to talk a little bit about the past five years under this government and the increase in our long-term debt by \$30 billion. The present government talks about building infrastructure—I heard the member from Peterborough talk about building their hospital. This government has held out to the public that they have paid for that Peterborough hospital when, in fact, they haven't. Effectively, what they've done is mortgage the Peterborough hospital. I guess my greatest concern over this government's mandate has been that they have collected massive revenues in surplus over the last four years of their five-year mandate, and in spite of that, they gave it all away. They spent it all. They gave \$1 million to a cricket club and called that an investment. I don't call that an investment. I call that a giveaway. I call that being spendthrift. I call that a waste of our money. Instead of paying for the Peterborough hospital, what they have done is borrow the money.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We've built the hospital.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: You built the hospital, but you built on it our children and our grandchildren, and we're going to have to pay for that in the future.

What they have done is not taken the tremendous amount of money they had and invested in it the Peterborough hospital, in highways and in schools, which they should have done, so that now we wouldn't have the debt of that additional \$30 billion to pay the interest and carrying charges on as we go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to comment on the statements made by my friend from Parkdale–High Park. As always, she was eloquent, and, as always, she pointed out, I think, where she sees the failings of this particular government. She zeroed in on three distinct avenues which I think are worthy of comment; that is, of seniors, of students and the debt load that they have, and of poverty in general.

In terms of the seniors, she quite rightly talked about the property tax and about the burden that is being placed on many seniors who have paid off their homes and who now find themselves with declining monies because of their pensions and, because monies are running out, are being forced into positions where they cannot pay the property tax.

She is quite right that what the government has put forward in its last budget was a pittance in comparison to what most of them are going to have to pay in taxes, particularly if those taxes rise by a large amount. The \$250 maximum that can be given to a senior is not too much if their properties escalate in value by a great amount. Today in the House I talked about two of them in Richmond Hill, one of whom is looking at \$7,000 in taxes this year, and the other of whom is looking at \$9,000 in taxes this year, both up substantially from last year. So \$250 will just not cut it. She is right to talk about that.

She is also right to talk about students in our society, the students who are going to lead this province in the future, the students upon whom we will rely to produce the goods and services and the economy of the future. The debt ratio of students in Ontario is the highest in all of Canada, and it's certainly not sustainable in the long term. She's right to ask the government to please try to do something about that.

Last, in terms of poverty, I can only reiterate what she had to say and echo my own frustration that we are moving far too slowly on this file.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened to the comments from the member for Parkdale–High Park. It's interesting. If she had been here earlier, she would have heard my address. I said that companies in Peterborough are developing new markets in India and China, two of the fastest-growing markets in the world, and it's incumbent upon us—I mean, everybody knows that if you're going to be successful in the global economy today, you have to find markets outside of our traditional market in the United States. This means going into places like India and China. GE, whose workers in Peterborough are proud members of the Canadian Auto Workers—their success right now and the reason they are on a massive recruiting campaign is that their generators and their motors are being sold in the Indian market and the Chinese market. GE Peterborough, the people in the marketing division there, are smart enough to know that you've got to diversify your market base and you go into the largest market segments in today's world, which are India and

China, Russia, and some parts of Europe. So if you're going to be successful down the road, you've got to exploit those markets.

It's interesting. My good friend from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who has been a very distinguished member of this House since 1977, was around during the Davis years. Mr. Davis, one of Ontario's most distinguished Premiers, was Premier for 14 years and ran 14 straight large deficits. A lot of the borrowing that was done during the Davis years to invest in schools, universities and community colleges was debt that is now being paid for by a generation that I'm part of as we move along. So it's really interesting. You use history when it suits you most.

Indeed, the member for Essex provided me with some interesting statistics. In 29 years of Tory rule, during that period of time, they only had seven balanced budgets—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. We'll have to wait for another time.

The member for Parkdale–High Park for a response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with interest, first of all, to the discussion about deficits. It's interesting historically that, when you look at provincial deficits, the party that has run the most balanced budgets is the New Democratic Party; second, the Progressive Conservative Party; third, the Liberal Party, just so you know historically that's the case.

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Second of all, what is good for General Electric and the Big Three automakers, as has been proven by the McGuinty government, is not necessarily good for the worker on the line. Unless there are job guarantees—and if you're offshoring to China and India, there probably won't be—that's not necessarily the answer.

To my friend from Mississauga South, the help that the McGuinty government has given to seniors is a maximum of \$250, and you don't qualify if you're in arrears on your taxes. They're the people who need it most. For most seniors who've just received an MPAC assessment and will get their tax bill, \$250 is not going to make the difference between keeping and losing their house.

I also failed to mention—I just ran out of time—our member from Hamilton Centre and her wonderful work on child care. Quebec has \$7-a-day child care. We don't have anything. We have one in 10 children who even have a space, and those who do pay over \$1,000 a month.

Just to sum up, instead of a “do” government, which is what we need in tough economic times, a government that's going to step up and do something—this is a quote from someone we all know and love, Homer Simpson—we've got a “duh” government. That's what's sitting across the floor. Once this government moves from “duh” to “do,” maybe we'll see some help for seniors, maybe we'll see some help for the young people, maybe we'll see some help for those who live in poverty, maybe we'll see some help for us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm not going to be as condescending as the last speaker because I don't have all the answers, and I don't think most members around here have all the answers. I think we have to start listening a bit more and not condemn all the time and not condescend all the time, because these are unprecedented times. The hackneyed attacks and the hackneyed descriptions—people aren't listening anymore. It's the same thing that's happening in the States. You've seen what the McCain-Palin people are doing. They're just doing what the member from Parkdale is doing: these senseless attacks, without listening to people.

What I've been hearing from people is that they want government to plan ahead to get us out of this very serious situation. We can point fingers at the neo-cons, we can point fingers at liberals and point fingers at the socialists—the public doesn't want the finger pointing. They want us to look at solutions and ways of getting us out of this because they are afraid. It doesn't matter whether you worked on Bay Street or whether you worked on Bloor Street in Toronto; people are afraid because they see the reality of what's happened. They know that people are unable to make the car payments. They're unable to perhaps even pay for the gas in the car because they're not even sure whether they're going to have a job the next day. That's what's happening in Ontario. To have this myopic look and say, “Well, it's all happening and it's all Ontario's fault. Aren't we awful here in Ontario. The government is awful”—people know better than that.

They know that their friends are calling them from Ireland, which is supposed to be the Celtic tiger, which was attracting people from all over the world by lowering taxes to the bottom. Ireland is almost bankrupt. They've had to increase their sales tax to 21%. Real estate prices have gone down by 30% in Ireland. Ireland was this great beacon for new capitalism: “Come to Ireland. Look what we're doing. We're lowering taxes.” In fact, I remember someone who worked here in Toronto who took off to Ireland. This was about a year ago. I wonder if he's going to come back.

I remember, back in the early 1990s, that the Conservatives were talking about the nirvana being New Zealand—“Go to New Zealand; they've got this incredible economy there”—then it collapsed. We hear the NDP talking about nirvana in Sweden. There's always some magic place.

Well, folks, we live in Ontario. It is a magic place here because, whether you want to look at government or you want to look at institutions, it's the people here. We've got people who are the hardest-working, entrepreneurial, risk takers, and they're also very kind people, here in Ontario. They help each other. That's why Ontario, I think, will get through this—not because of government but because of its people.

That's why it's amazing that of the speakers here this afternoon, not one of them mentioned the constant rip-off of Ontario workers. I don't hear the NDP ever mention that. If you lose your job in Ontario, you're never eligible

for EI. It is disgusting that that takes place. You can't get unemployment insurance in Hamilton. You can't get unemployment insurance in Chatham. You can't get unemployment insurance in Oshawa. It's almost impossible: 75% of our citizens don't get it, yet they pay into unemployment insurance. That's the kind of thing we have to fix if we are going to get through this very difficult time.

That's the kind of thing we can do as MPPs that gets us somewhere because it helps people. If we want to start to change things so we can get through, we have to make some of these things better for our ordinary people. That's one thing we should all be talking about every time we stand up, the EI rip-off that has been taking place.

Interjection: Who did it?

Mr. Mike Colle: Again, there goes the NDP: "Well, who did it?" I don't care who did it when. It's being done right now. It's the same—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: The NDP just proved my point again. Who did it? I told you, I don't care who did it. All I know is the workers want us to fix it and make it right. I'd rather spend my time fixing it than blaming someone for causing it. The Conservatives want to blame Paul Martin; the NDP want to blame—I don't know—Brian Mulroney. I don't care about Paul Martin or Brian Mulroney. I care about that Ontario worker in all of our ridings who can't get unemployment insurance when they have paid into it for years. Some of them have paid into it for 10 or 15 years, they can't get it, and we don't say anything here.

How can you stand up in this House to talk about poverty and not talk about unemployment insurance rip-offs? That's how they get into poverty: because when they can't get EI, they go onto welfare; because if you can't get EI, you can't get EI training programs—you're not eligible. They talk about poverty, they're going to do something about poverty, and they don't talk about that rip-off. How can the NDP, day after day, never talk about the EI rip-off, I want to know, if they are so concerned about poverty?

I don't mean to be critical; I'm trying to respond to the fact that we've got to look at fixing things rather than pointing fingers. Then—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: There he goes again. The Conservatives are worried about saying something bad about the federal government. God forbid we should say something about the federal government. He's worried about mentioning the federal government. Anyway, sorry that I mentioned—I didn't even mention Mr. Harper. Sorry I did that. I'm sorry I mentioned the federal government. I apologize.

I just want to say one other thing that's in this bill is that—the NDP talk about helping seniors. They don't talk about the fact that what this bill does is ensure there's a higher threshold for seniors who can get an Ontario property tax credit, which is up to \$600 per household if you're under the new threshold. On top of the \$600 that you might be eligible for, for the Ontario property tax credit, which the member doesn't know about, there's the Ontario property tax grant. The Ontario property tax credit has been in effect for four years, and you haven't known about that. A senior in Ontario can get up to \$600, if they're under the \$24,000 threshold, in a property tax credit. This year in the budget we added the Ontario property tax grant, which is \$250 above the \$600 and, when fully implemented, will be up to \$500. I know that doesn't seem to be much for the members opposite, but the \$600 plus the \$500 for a senior living in a small home is a help. That's all I'm saying.

I'm saying that there's more that should be done, and the property tax assessment system is something that we have to endure, but at least this government is trying. We don't have all the answers, but we're trying.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): It being 6 o'clock, the time for debate has expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I declare the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday the 28th of October, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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, Kuldeep (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
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Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
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Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
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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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