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**Official Report
of Debates
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Tuesday 9 December 2008

Mardi 9 décembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CORONERS AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES CORONERS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coroners.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to make a couple of comments in this regard. It is a bill that a few of my colleagues have already spoken to. It's a bill that we are quite eager to send to hearings, because we believe that by and large much of what is recommended is positive. There is some serious disagreement on the bill that I will speak to as well, briefly, because I think it's important to speak to it. But some of the bill provisions I think are useful to repeat and to support.

They want to create a registry of qualified practising pathologists approved to perform post-mortem examinations to be established by the chief forensic pathologist; establish a death investigation oversight council to provide oversight for the death investigation, with responsibilities that include monitoring and overseeing compliance with the act; oversight with strategic planning and preparing an annual report for the minister—useful; establish legislative authority for the chief coroner to appoint appropriately qualified death investigators to perform the duties of a coroner, providing for greater flexibility in northern and First Nations communities where doctors may not be available—a useful provision; and provide coroners with the authority to release information from a death investigation to advance public safety and prevent similar deaths.

These kinds of provisions are, on the whole, very good, and we're very eager to have people comment on these. The provision that I will speak to as well is they will remove the ability of the minister to call an inquest, which was not recommended by the judge who wrote this

report, and that's something that New Democrats are concerned about and want to speak to. Much of the report written by Judge Goudge, but not solely—it was a lengthy inquiry—dealt with the behaviour of the pathologist, the so-called Dr. Charles Smith.

This is a story that has concerned many of us, because as a result of the decisions he made, many innocent people went to jail for allegedly having killed their babies. When you send innocent people to jail on the basis of their having killed their children, it has serious implications for those individuals.

I just can't imagine—and those of us, of course, who cannot dream of ever hurting a child—that a child should die and that a parent or a relative should be accused of the killing of the child—wrongly accused. Just imagine what that means. Imagine the accusation of having killed a child. Imagine the shame, the ignominy, and the long-lasting feeling of pain and anger that one would feel under those circumstances. How do you deal with that? And how do you deal with that if you've been put in jail for two years, five years, seven years, 10 years? It's just unspeakable, unspeakable.

All this, because Dr. Charles Smith was assumed to be a very competent pathologist, but it turns out he wasn't very competent at all. It turns out that there were many stories connected to the issue of competence but it was never followed through. As a result of that, so many people have been hurt so badly. How do you compensate them for that? I don't know how you do that, I just don't. But we have to find a way to compensate and money, yes, is not the sole way to repay them for the wrong that has been done, but it certainly is one way to help out to restore the lives that have been so badly damaged. That's one issue that was dealt with in the Goudge report, and we support it very strongly.

This bill removes a section from the Coroners Act—which New Democrats do not support—that is, section 22 of the Coroners Act, which allows the Minister of Community Safety to call for an inquest, notwithstanding that local or regional coroners or, indeed, the chief coroner, may have decided not to do so. We believe this section should be retained and should be maintained and used when necessary. We know this is a rarely used provision and, because it's rarely used, we think it should stay within the purview of the minister to be able to have it there in the event that, for whatever reason, political or otherwise, the wisdom in the judicious use of that provision is useful to have.

We don't quite understand why the government is eager to move away by dropping that provision. If it's

rarely used, why take it away? The government can argue that it's rarely used, so there's no reason to keep it. But we say, because it's rarely used, that is the reason to keep it. Does it indicate that the government is clearly moving away from coroners' inquests? Oh, sure, they can say, "No, we're not doing that. Local, regional, chief coroners can do that at any time." But does the mere fact that this provision should be removed by the government from use by a minister who might feel the need to do so hint at a move away from using this section? I suggest, and New Democrats suggest, that it does.

0910

The argument advanced by the government was that Judge Goudge indicated we should remove this provision; that was the hint, the suggestion that was made. Andrea Horwath, our critic, was in the ministerial discussions where MPPs are briefed, and that's where she was alerted to this particular problem. So she, along with our researchers, went and dug up the report and looked at it and discovered that Judge Goudge's recommendations were very clear and said that the minister should be retaining his opportunity to order an inquest under section 22. So contrary to what had been suggested by the government through the minister, Judge Goudge said this provision should be retained.

So we say to the government, why move away from the use of this section? Why take it away when Judge Goudge said you should be retaining it? Why is it that you have an interest in simply, for whatever reason, saying this is of no value to you when Judge Goudge, having done a lengthy investigation, a lengthy inquiry, proposed that you keep it?

We believe that you should keep this section. This is one of the reasons we want to be able to take this out to committee hearings, where we are looking forward to comments on this report, on Bill 115, from many, many people who have expertise in this particular field. The expertise of others who are actively involved would be very, very helpful to me and to members of government, because this is an issue they deal with on a regular basis.

The Criminal Lawyers' Association, for example, is one association I want to hear from; the Ontario Bar Association is another; and many other lawyers who are actively involved. We think the majority of these recommendations are very useful. We oppose the elimination of section 22, and we hope that the government, in the end, after those hearings, will listen to the folks and hopefully change that. I just wanted to put those few things on the record.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening very closely to my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, and I think he did raise some of the more, let's say, debatable points about Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act. I guess what it sort of brings to mind is the fact that there is a huge responsibility on our government—on all governments—in terms of dealing with deaths, accidental or otherwise, and sometimes we never stop to reflect on the expertise

we need in our coroner's department, the qualified men and women we need there.

As he said, stop and think about the agony this could bring to a family when there is a wrongful death involved. I know that the province of Newfoundland has just finished two years of public inquiry about the gaps in their pathology in diagnosing cancer in women. They have an acute shortage of pathologists in Newfoundland; so they've had to take on an aggressive policy of attracting qualified men and women.

This act is really a modernization, a bringing up to date and putting in more safeguards to ensure that our pathologists and coroners are up to the highest standards. It's something we don't like to talk about or deal with, but it's a reality that goes on in any jurisdiction. This act is an attempt to try to rectify some of those gaps.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to pay respect to the member from Trinity–Spadina. He certainly put a human face on the tragedy, shock and bewilderment faced by families that would have been victimized, I suspect, by the findings of Dr. Smith. Of course, the Goudge inquiry was a direct result of that.

I think it's important that those in positions of authority like that are able to have some vindication, if you will, as a tragedy of any family under the circumstances, than to have that magnified by being accused of being guilty of the abuse that may have caused one of their children's death—just unimaginable. As a parent of five children, I certainly think the member from Trinity–Spadina put a human face to that story.

If you look at the legislation, it's fairly technical. The report on pediatric forensic pathology in Ontario was released in October 2008, and 11 themes and 169 recommendations came out of it. I guess this legislation is an attempt to put a framework structure around this. It's my understanding that this bill will go to committee, and in that process I would guess there will certainly be amendments. But I think we should put a voice and a face, as the member from Trinity–Spadina has done, on those who were victimized by someone in a position of authority who wasn't qualified to perform the function. Hopefully this legislation will correct that.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina; he knows I respect him. In our friendship, I have come to know that he speaks well of the social aspect of this bill. I too want to echo what he said about the tragedy that brought this on, along with the fact that this bill is in need of passage for the very sake of what happened, and I'm sure he understands that.

I'm hearing virtual support from all sides of the House, and that there are areas that need some correction. As I have now done carriage of a couple of bills, I would make the commitment to the member that it is my intention to listen carefully, to insist that we go to committee and to insist that we have the hearings he is

talking about. In the past, I have made it a point to ensure that all the points that need to be made get made, and then we, as a government, deliberate as to which of the points that are made are worthy of amendment. I make that commitment to him again.

The other point I wish to make—I said this before, and pointed directly at the minister and said he was not a pediatric pathology expert. There are very few people in this room who have the expertise that is required to analyze what is going on in those unfortunate deaths. When we revert to the clause the member is having concerns about, I ask us to remember—and I ask this with respect—why specifically do we need to have the minister's fingers in this very, very specific science when it comes to doing a review of whether or not an inquest should be held? I offer him that question, and maybe he can help me with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment.

I'll return to the member for Trinity–Spadina, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank the friends who have spoken in response to what I said.

For me, having the power by the government to be able to call an inquest is a power I would not want to give away. There are often different reasons why we may need that power. Even though we rarely use it, I think it's a power that exists for the purposes of seeking justice. Yes, coroners do that on a regular basis; that is their job. And yes, they are the experts; that is true. There are times when a government needs to intervene. We don't do it for the purpose of just having fun. These are serious issues. When you call an inquest, you call an inquest in order to be able to get to the bottom of the problem—to allow ordinary people who have been affected in a very serious way to respond—and to be able to make recommendations as a way of preventing future deaths from happening wherever they happen, whether they are in a workplace, or a hospital or wherever it is that they happen.

It is a power that we do not ever want to abuse, but it is a power that we should have in order to be able to say to people, “This is something that governments take seriously. This is something that governments want the power to use in the event that we deem it necessary to do so as a way of making sure that the prevention happens. It's not something that should be used as a regular tool, but it should be there for the purpose of using it when necessary but not necessarily in every circumstance. I'm not sure whether or not we can deal with those differences, but I hope we can.

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

Mr. Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 115. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): So ordered. Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I therefore indicate to the House that we stand in recess until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0922 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to introduce some guests today who are relatives of Bradyn Litster, our page from Hamilton. His grandmother Irene Noack and his mother, Monika Litster, are here, and I'd would like to welcome them on behalf of the Legislature.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have two welcoming items. The first is to one of our Ajax-Pickering youth Parliament members Kurtis McAleer, who is in the west gallery. We welcome him back again.

Also, I would like to introduce a school class which is, as we speak, on their way. It took me three hours to come in on the 401 this morning, and they're pretty close to the area where I live. Those are the grade 5 students from Valley Farm Public School in Pickering. Many thanks to their organizer, Debbie Kravis, and everyone who is joining us from the school today. We expect them momentarily.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to introduce some guests who don't happen to be with us, but are in the Legislative Building today, and they are the members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance. I remind all members that there will be beautiful poinsettias in the Leg dining room. Be sure to visit our friends from TOGA.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to introduce some guests who will be joining us shortly in the west members' gallery. I'd like to introduce Leonard Nieberg and his wife, Cynthia, and Petra Moore and her husband, Rick. They're here to observe the Legislature.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: There's a spouse in the House, and it's mine. I just want to introduce my husband, Gil Gaspar.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of page Sarah Danchuk to welcome her grandmother Helen Danchuk and her grandfather Peter Danchuk joining us here in the Legislature today.

Also I would like to welcome some guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery, some constituency staff and some friends: Kathie Cunningham, Craig Bradford, Kim Davis, Veronika Sonier, Alisa Leitch, Lucy Gouveia, Kyle Gouveia, Don Kilpatrick and Andrew Kilpatrick. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier and deals with yesterday's report from the Auditor General and with an issue that the official opposition has raised many times over the past few years, to no avail, and that's your government's failure to deal with the issue of contraband cigarettes. The Auditor General points out that by adopting your look-the-other-way justice system and ignoring this problem, you are costing half a billion dollars a year in lost taxes to the province.

Premier, why should law-abiding Ontarians have to put up with the cuts you've announced to family health teams and nurses just because, as the Auditor General said, you lack the will to collect the taxes you're owed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to begin by thanking the Auditor General for the work he has done once again. Sometimes in government we remain so focused at the 30,000-foot level that we don't have a good understanding of what's happening on the front lines, and we rely on folks like the Auditor General, the Ombudsman and other people to shine a light into those places and make sure we are in fact getting value for money.

On the matter of tobacco taxes, we have made some progress; I think it's important to acknowledge that. But there's obviously still more work to be done. In particular, we have doubled our convictions since last year, we've increased enforcement measures five times since 2003 and we've increased tobacco seizures by 365%. That's year over year, so we are making progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As I said, we've been raising this issue for a number of years. He talks about enforcement. I've talked to a small business operator in my riding, a convenience store operator, who has been inspected a dozen times and audited by your inspectors, while we have illegal operations on government-owned land, which you completely ignore. You're hassling these honest, law-abiding small businessmen having a very difficult time in this difficult economy, yet you're turning a blind eye to other illegal operations. You're costing Ontario taxpayers \$500 million, while you're laying off nurses, cutting back on family health teams—a host of programs that are important to everyday hard-working, law-abiding Ontarians. Why will you not take effective action to deal with this problem?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I thank the member for the supplemental. I think he does a disservice to police services across the country when he ignores the fact that police services are working co-operatively on an hourly basis—in fact, on a minute-by-minute basis—and they're having incredible success. Sure, there's more work to do and we will continue to do our part, the OPP will continue to do their part and we will work together on this

problem to ensure that we eliminate as much contraband tobacco as is possible. But for him to say that nothing's happening is a disservice to the OPP, the RCMP and the IBET, and he should be ashamed of himself.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's regrettable this minister stood in the House today and bad-mouthed the Auditor General of this province. That's effectively what he did. We're referencing the report and the concern expressed by the Auditor General of this province. He's the one saying that you lack the will—you and your government, your colleagues—to enforce the law in this province. It's your look-the-other-way justice system when it comes to dealing with these illegal operations.

I'm asking you a very specific question: What are you going to do about this? Why don't you enact and enforce the laws? This is not a slight on police. The Auditor General is saying you're costing Ontario taxpayers \$500 million, while you're slashing, cutting and freezing important programs that serve all Ontarians. Why will you not enforce the law?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: For the interim leader to say that the OPP, the RCMP and the IBET are not enforcing the law is a gross overstatement. They are being very, very successful. October 30: 500,000 cigarettes seized; November 1: 257,000 cigarettes seized; November 26: 50 cartons of cigars, 2,332 cartons of fine-cut tobacco. There is more work to do. We appreciate the Auditor General's report and the recommendations, but don't ever let it be said that the OPP is not doing their job. They are doing their job very, very effectively. They will continue to work with their policing partners and we will be successful on this.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier. The people of this province are not the dupes you think they are and the police know that the person not doing his job is that minister.

Premier, again, back to the Auditor General's report in speaking to incompetence and mismanagement, which seem to be the order of the day with respect to his commentary. Particularly glaring, I believe, is the blatant abuse of sick leave among jail guards, taking an average of 32 days of sick leave a year. That's an increase of 63% since 2001, costing Ontarians \$20 million a year. Premier, how could you have allowed this to happen? Is your minister AWOL on this file as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to thank the auditor as well for this particular advice. Obviously, that rate of sick leave is unacceptable. There is obviously a serious problem associated with this. I've asked the minister to take a careful look at this, but I want to say to Ontario taxpayers that this is an unacceptable rate of absenteeism and sick leave. We're not prepared to accept it. We will do the necessary work to find out more precisely what is

causing it and we'll do everything that we can to address it.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, last time I checked, this government had been in office for over five years. I will admit this has been a consistent problem in the system, but it has doubled on your watch. That's how significant this problem has become. The Auditor General pointed to one corrections facility that was privately operated until your ideological closure. When the government took over operation of that jail, privately operated, absenteeism jumped by 55% in one year. Talk about incompetence and mismanagement. Premier, I ask you again, why should Ontarians have any faith in terms of your government knowing how to manage their tax dollars efficiently? What specific steps are you taking? Let's hear some specific steps today, not these generalities. How are you dealing with this problem?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services can speak to that.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I thank the member again for the supplemental question. We have implemented a program to track absenteeism in our correctional facilities. We will continue to do that tracking. We will continue to work in a very, very proactive way with our partners in correction, the union and all levels in the correctional services part of our ministry, to ensure that we reduce that number, because, as the Premier said, that number is too high. It's not acceptable to me; it's not acceptable to this government; it's not acceptable to the opposition. And do you know what? It's not acceptable to the correctional services officers also.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: What an enlightening response: "It's not acceptable." The minister, I think, has been in his job for over a year now. I have to suspect—he seemed to be completely caught off guard yesterday when he was asked about this, which has to be surprising, shocking and alarming with respect to this problem.

This problem has grown under his government's watch, dramatically grown. We're looking at this province being in a recession, hundreds of thousands of people losing their jobs, and you have government employees taking over a month off—paid leave, effectively. Over a year on the job, five years plus that this government has been in office, and you don't have anything but generalities, again saying, "We're concerned. We're concerned. We're concerned." Well, Ontario taxpayers, hard-working, honest Ontarians, want action, not words like "Concerned, concerned." When are you going to do something? Let us know what the specifics are.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Well, let me speak a little bit more slowly, then. We have implemented a program to track absenteeism in our correctional institutions. I think that's very proactive. We will continue to work with our partners in correctional services to diminish that number. I think that is proactive. And we will continue to be very

proactive with all our partners to ensure that that number comes down. We've all agreed that that number is too high, and we're going to work together to ensure that the number comes down.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The Auditor General says that the McGuinty government could have built a 716-bed public not-for-profit hospital in Brampton for \$380 million. Instead, the McGuinty government chose to build a 479-bed profit-driven corporate consortium hospital that cost \$614 million.

Given the Auditor General's finding that when the McGuinty government put a profit-driven corporate consortium in charge of the Brampton Hospital, the costs skyrocketed, will the Premier order an audit by the Auditor General of the Sarnia and North Bay hospital projects, where similar profit-driven corporate consortia are all involved?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Of course it's up to the auditor to decide what he'd like to take a look at and we welcome his oversight in any area that he deems to be appropriate. With respect to this particular hospital, my honourable colleague knows that there was an agreement which had been entered into by the previous Conservative government.

Hon. David Caplan: As the auditor pointed out.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As the auditor pointed out. We made what changes we could to that agreement. The good news is that the people of Brampton now have a brand new public hospital. It will grow to 608 beds. The other good news is that we have introduced some real, solid changes recognized by the auditor with respect to how we deal with these kinds of construction projects on an ongoing basis. In particular, we now have a value-for-money assessment that must be done before any decision is made regarding finances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier knows it was in fact his government that continued to okay the profit-driven corporate consortia Brampton hospital, which skyrocketed the cost of the hospital and provided fewer beds. The Auditor General gives three reasons why these profit-driven corporate consortia hospitals cost more. First, the corporation has to pay more for borrowing than the province pays. Second, the benefit of your so-called risk transfer concept is seriously overstated. Three, the private sector profit-driven consultants who get involved charge a lot of money. The Premier can talk about how this is a good deal. The fact of the matter is, the Auditor General found it's a very bad deal.

The question is, is the Premier going to continue to follow the Conservatives or is the Premier going to order an audit of the North Bay and Sarnia hospital projects where profit—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we've made changes. We're following our own particular process and I think one of the most important defining characteristics of our process, unlike the previous Conservative government process, is that there has to be a value-for-money assessment done. That means if we're going to build a new courthouse or a new hospital, we have to go through the numbers and make a real assessment as to whether it's going to be less expensive under the traditional financing method, where the government borrows the money, or whether it's less expensive under our AFP model. We are open to this. In some cases we're building hospitals under this AFP method, where we borrow private money, or we do it under the traditional methods; it depends on the outcome. We're always trying to get the best possible value for Ontario taxpayers.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier says that a profit-driven private consortium hospital in Brampton that costs \$250 million more and delivers fewer beds is a good deal. It's not just the Auditor General; the mayor of Sarnia knows that the hospital redevelopment there, if it were done on a public, not-for-profit basis, would cost about \$120 million. The latest figures from the McGuinty government, using the profit-driven model, put it at over \$300 million. We were told that the North Bay hospital, done on a public, not-for-profit basis, would cost about \$400 million. We're now told that the profit-driven model is headed for \$1 billion plus. How much evidence does the Premier need before he orders an audit of these profit-driven Bay Street consortium hospitals that are costing far more money than an ordinary public, not-for-profit hospital would cost?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure of the source of the numbers that my honourable colleague is introducing here today. I haven't heard them before.

I can say that we're committed to doing two very important things for Ontarians when it comes to health care. First of all, it is to make sure they have the best possible care in every community. Secondly, we are committed to building new hospitals where that's appropriate to do so. We want to do that using the least public money possible.

Again, these assessments that we make, by the way, are available online for people to examine themselves. We make a determination as to whether it better serves the public interest that we go with the traditional financing method or whether we use this new AFP model. But in every case, I want to assure Ontarians that the hospitals are publicly owned and publicly controlled.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

1050

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier again, I think the Auditor General's report speaks for itself: public hospital, \$380 million, profit-driven corporate hospital,

\$614 million. Only Dalton McGuinty would say that's a good deal.

I want to ask the Premier about some other serious problems. The Auditor General reports that over the last five years under the McGuinty government, the number of criminal charges pending in our courts grew by 17% to more than 275,000. At the same time, the number of charges pending for more than eight months increased 16%.

Do you know what this means, Premier? It means the McGuinty government is setting up Ontario for another Askov decision, where thousands of criminal charges get thrown out of the courts. What have you been doing with our court system that you would allow such a scandalous situation to take place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I agree with the auditor when he says that faster criminal justice means better public security. I agree with the auditor when he suggests that faster criminal justice is more effective criminal justice.

I spoke to the issue of the unproductive adjournments and their great increase last March. In June, we launched Justice on Target, which for the first time ever has set a public target of reducing unproductive adjournments and the time to dispose of criminal cases by 30% over four years. We're already in the first three action sites: London, Newmarket, and North York. We're going to reduce the target and free up resources for better public security and better, more effective criminal justice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government wants to pretend there is no problem here. I want to remind the Premier and the Attorney General of something that just happened a few months ago, where many members of the so-called Toronto Police Service drug squad had literally dozens of criminal charges against them for thievery, assault and extortion. It was called the largest case of police corruption in the history of Canada. Do you know what happened? The charges were thrown out of court. Why? Because of unreasonable delay.

These are some of the charges that are being thrown out of our courts now, because the McGuinty government talks a good line about criminal justice and meanwhile the number of criminal charges that aren't being dealt with grows every day. Again, how can the McGuinty government, after five years, allow such a scandalous situation to happen in our criminal courts?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Far from the suggestion being made by the leader of the third party, and having worked in the system for almost 25 years, I know this issue has been with us for a long time. After the 50,000 to 80,000 charges disappeared under Askov—the honourable member was in charge—we saw appearances—

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: No, no—we saw appearances and time to disposition increase for 15 years steadily. That's why we brought in the Justice on Target strategy. We brought it in to reduce the number of un-

necessary appearances, which by the fourth year will mean there are half a million fewer unnecessary adjournments every year. That means police not waiting in court, crowns not dealing with cases that don't need to be dealt with, courts not just adjourning cases—more effective justice for all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I find some irony here that a member of the McGuinty government would refer to the Askov decision. I want to remind you what happened. Under the last Liberal government of David Peterson, between 1985 and 1990, thousands of criminal charges were allowed to sit in the criminal court system until the Supreme Court of Canada threw them out in 1990. So saying that this is somehow acceptable is not acceptable—not acceptable for anyone.

Over the last five years, the McGuinty government has allowed this situation to grow again. You say there's no problem. I think there's a problem when the largest police corruption case in the history of Canada is thrown out under the McGuinty government because of unreasonable delay. I think there's a problem when thievery and corruption by the police is thrown out.

Again, what is the McGuinty government going to do, other than try to blame someone else?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would simply say that the matter he refers to is under appeal, and the trial hasn't actually occurred yet, so the conclusions might be a little off base from a former Attorney General.

I'd simply say that nothing I suggested, nothing I've said and nothing we've done in the past year suggests anything other than a determination to reform our justice system to make it faster and more effective. We're already under way with Justice on Target. The Code-LeSage report—former Chief Justice LeSage and Michael Code—gave us excellent advice with respect to the most complex cases, and we're already implementing its major recommendations. I don't suggest for a moment that any particular leader in this House is responsible for the increase in court backlogs, but it has been an issue for decades and now we're finally addressing it.

TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Education. In June this year, the minister advised the Toronto Catholic District School Board that she was taking over control of that board to take over the administration of the affairs of that board. One would assume that that would include paying of bills for work that has been done for that school board.

I'd like the minister to explain why a company in this province, CEC Mechanical Ltd., is being forced to go to court to collect on \$485,000 worth of work that they did for the board. Through repeated letters, there was an admittance that the money is owed. To date, after months of procedure, they are still waiting for the money. Will

the minister explain why the incompetency that she was intending to replace continues at that board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Indeed, there is a provincial supervisor in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. I do not have the information that the member opposite is seeking. I certainly can get that information for him, but I have to say that the running of the Toronto Catholic District School Board by Mr. Norbert Hartmann has vastly improved over the last few months to what it was previously. We have new expense guidelines for trustees; there are new governance processes in place. There is a much tighter ship at the Toronto Catholic board.

I will certainly get the information on this particular case, and I'd be happy to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I appreciate that undertaking by the minister. Here's what David Beswick of CEC Mechanical Ltd. said: "We have never seen action of this nature by a provincially funded body in 23 years of business, with completion of in excess of 450 projects of this nature."

I welcome the minister's intervention in this at a time when businesses across this province are finding it difficult, given the economic challenges, to keep their doors open. This board and this government should pay their bill. What business can possibly sustain the non-payment of \$450,000?

I would ask that the minister look into it immediately. I'll be pleased to provide her with the documents and ask her whether she would be willing to speak to the president of this company to get some background and detail on the matter.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've already undertaken to look into this situation, but I want to make a broader point about the way we do business in this House. I just want to be clear that I do everything I can to be accessible to my constituents and to the members opposite.

I do not have any correspondence on this issue from the member opposite, and I would have been happy before the House—not that I need to be prepared for questions; I can answer the questions on the fly. But it would be reasonable for the member opposite to let me know, and I would be happy then to have an answer for him either in question period or after question period.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. The Auditor General has been noting concern about the way the Technical Standards and Safety Authority has been overseen since 2003, five years prior to the explosion at Sunrise Propane. Yesterday, the Auditor General again flagged the TSSA's self-regulation as a huge problem in this province. Why won't this minister admit that the TSSA has failed and have the ministry take direct responsibility for oversight and enforcement of Ontario's safety standards?

1100

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am very pleased to answer this question. In 2003, the Auditor General made about four recommendations, and all those recommendations in fact have been implemented. These recommendations were establishing the administrative agreements, and these have been established with five organizations already. Then there was a recommendation that we should have more appointees from different groups and independent directors at these organizations. We are doing that. In fact, for the TSSA, we used to appoint about 24% of the directors, and I have already instructed them that we will be appointing 46% of the directors. So we are moving ahead with all those.

In addition to that, everybody is aware in this House that I asked the specialists to give me some recommendations and I will be more than pleased to—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't believe that doubling the number of directors is going to make one hill of beans of difference in terms of the safety of Ontarians.

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, whose members have work that falls under the auspices of TSSA oversight, are actually supporting a call for the TSSA to be taken over, to become directly the responsibility of this minister. They don't trust the TSSA to get the safety job done in this province. I don't think that Ontarians trust them, either.

Two people died on that devastating day in August. That explosion, as everyone knows, could have been significantly worse.

Why won't the minister admit that the TSSA has failed, and have the ministry take direct responsibility for oversight and enforcement of Ontario safety standards, as CEP is calling for and as the NDP is calling for?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It's one thing to ask questions in the House. The other thing is actually to do and take some concrete actions. I'm not sure the member has even gone and seen where the incident took place. I was there, the Premier was there, and we have seen it.

In addition to that, we appointed two experts right away in August. We asked them to make recommendations, which were delivered to us in November, and 30 out of the 40 recommendations have already been acted upon. And the other one, we are working on. I have written to the federal government, and if there are legislative changes required, we will make those legislative changes.

Safety is important to us, and we will make sure that the TSSA and all other organizations make sure that all Ontarians are safe.

LINCOLN M. ALEXANDER AWARD

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander is one of Ontario's most well-thought-of Lieutenant Governors. His story is one of firsts and barriers broken. After distinguishing himself in

the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War, Mr. Alexander attended Osgoode Hall Law School and then became Canada's first black member of Parliament and ultimately a cabinet minister. Upon his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Mr. Alexander used his time in office to bring a great deal of attention to the issues of race and equality.

I think that you will agree it is fitting that the Lincoln M. Alexander Award is presented annually in his honour. Minister, could you please share with the members of the Legislature some details about this very important and distinguished award?

Hon. Michael Chan: My thanks to the honourable member. Tomorrow I will have the honour of joining the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David C. Onley, at the presentation ceremony for the Lincoln M. Alexander Award.

The award is presented annually on or around December 10, the anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Now in its 15th year, this award recognizes youth who have demonstrated leadership and made significant contributions toward elimination of racial discrimination in their community and around the province.

The award is presented each year. Two student awards are given to senior secondary school students, and a single community award is also presented to a youth between 16 and 25 years of age.

I look forward to honouring these outstanding students tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister. Lincoln Alexander has frequently said, "An individual can be instrumental in changing society." I know that I and many members of this Legislature also know that to be absolutely true.

Minister, I am hoping that you can share with our colleagues some information about the recipients of the Lincoln M. Alexander Award and how they are instrumental in changing society.

I am also very proud to share that one recipient, Ms. Muna Ali, is a resident of the great riding of Peterborough.

Hon. Michael Chan: My thanks to the member for Peterborough for helping to highlight these important awards.

All members of this Legislature agree that race must never be a barrier to success in Ontario. Ms. Muna Ali of Peterborough, Ms. Chris-Ann Manning of Ajax and Mr. Femi Doyle-Marshall of Scarborough not only believe this maxim, they live it. They are not only leaders in the fight to eliminate racial discrimination, but leaders in their respective communities.

To highlight but one example, Ms. Muna Ali of Peterborough has been active in many communities, including the Community Race Relations Committee of Peterborough, the Kawartha World Issues Centre and the Ontario Public Interest Research Group.

The McGuinty government understands that racism must not be tolerated in any form. All members of this Legislature can learn from the examples set by—

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

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. The Auditor General's report has revealed serious problems with our criminal justice system. Despite an investment of almost \$100 million, the Auditor General said the backlog of criminal cases in our court system has risen by 16%, now sitting at its highest level in 15 years. And what has your government done about it? It has thrown piles of money at the system without even knowing what the problem is. Why is that? Because you don't track criminal cases and have no idea how many are being thrown out because of delay.

Premier, how can you possibly fix the system without even knowing what the problem is?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think that my friend makes a good point. Over the past five years, we've invested in more judges, more justices of the peace, more crowns, more police; we have more courts and more courthouses. But what we've seen is that the number of adjournments has actually increased dramatically, as it has for the past 15 years. The justice-on-target strategy is all about reducing those unproductive appearances, those adjournments, so that every participant in the justice system can get on with what everybody considers more important: the resolution of cases by way of plea, by way of trial, freeing up courtrooms, freeing up courthouses, police not sitting in the courts waiting for adjournments; they're out on the street where we would rather they be, investigating or preventing crimes. That's the purpose of the justice-on-target strategy: to make the courts more effective, not just more of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again to the Premier, with respect to the comments made by the Attorney General, the issue of adjournments is only one part of the criminal justice system. In 2006, we asked your government to support our bill, which would require certain statistics to be kept with respect to the criminal justice system that would assist in knowing exactly where all of the problems are, not just one. Yesterday, the Auditor General told you exactly what we told you several years ago.

Premier, are you prepared to make truth and transparency in the justice system the law in Ontario by agreeing to provide and maintain the basic statistics that we asked for pursuant to our bill several years ago?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: For the first time in the history of this province, if you go on the website www.justiceontargetontario you can find all the stats from every Ontario Court of Justice in every part of this province. It's never happened before. It doesn't get more transparent than that. What they'll show you is that of the

average nine appearances that every criminal case takes now, six are adjournments. We do a lot of adjournments every year; justice on target gets people to stop adjourning cases, get to the decision point faster. It frees up the police to be back out on the street, the crowns to be dealing with the cases. Faster justice means better public safety and security. Faster justice is more effective justice. That's what justice on target is all about. We'll keep my friend apprised, as all Ontarians, through the website.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. The manufacturing job crisis in Ontario worsens each day. The province has lost 5% of its manufacturing jobs in just one month, including companies usually immune to economic ups and downs. In London, 3M recently laid off 120 workers and has announced the likelihood of hundreds more. The McGuinty response was to tell people to go shopping, and then take a two-month holiday.

Is this the kind of leadership hard-working Ontarians deserve at this most difficult and anxious time?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that if my friend had the opportunity to reflect for a moment, he would not put his question that way. I know that every member of this House is concerned by the global economic crisis and the impact that it's having on Ontario. The single largest issue we face with respect to our manufacturing sector is the drying up of American demand. The overwhelming majority of our products are sent to the US, and since consumer demand there is so low, it's having a direct impact on us.

What we are doing is finding ways to help workers who lose their jobs. We have a retraining program in place. We have, I think, over \$1.5 billion in funds available to help strengthen our manufacturers so that if they're prepared to make additional investments and take additional risks, we're prepared to support them in that regard. But I think it's just straight unfair to say that we're not bringing something to the table when it comes to helping our workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Premier, I don't know if this is the best time to shut down for two months. The government talks as though it was taking significant action, but it has no bold plan to protect urgently at-risk manufacturing jobs. It has minimal investment in public infrastructure, no plan to spark investments in green jobs, and it has no social investment plan to create jobs through affordable housing, child care and income assistance. Is the McGuinty government going on a holiday to run from its lack of action or because it simply doesn't have the answers that the people of Ontario need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the important national—and even continental—debates has to do with the best way to stimulate the economy. I think there's certainly a growing consensus that one of the very best ways to do that is to invest in infrastructure.

In this very year, this fiscal year 2007-08, our government is investing \$9.9 billion in infrastructure. In the transportation sector, it's \$4.1 billion; in health, it's \$925 million; education, \$1.8 billion; the environment, \$390 million; municipal, \$1.8 billion; justice, \$250 million; and in other areas combined it's \$720 million, for a total of \$9.9 billion. On a per capita basis, I'm not aware of any other jurisdiction in North America that's putting that much money into their infrastructure. It's good for our economy and it's good for jobs.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I've got a question for the Minister of Culture. In the last few months, there's been much discussion about the importance of culture as an economic driver, especially since Ontario's cultural industries contribute almost \$20 billion to our gross domestic product and create over a quarter of a million jobs. Now more than ever, it's important that the government invest in innovative ways to help to grow our economy, and by investing in industries that help our economy now, we strengthen our economy over the long term.

Would the minister tell this House just what the government is doing to strengthen Ontario's cultural industries so we can generate economic growth here in the province and remain competitive overseas?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Over the last decade, Ontario's creative industries have grown faster than the rest of the economy. In the next 20 years, job growth in these industries is expected to surpass most of Ontario's employment sectors. Ontario's cultural industries are a vital contributor to our economic growth and prosperity, and that's why the government's \$3.3-million investment in the entertainment and creative cluster partnership has been so successful.

This investment supports 16 innovative projects and involves 80 collaborative partners, and this investment is part of this McGuinty government's five-point economic plan to invest in skills and knowledge, innovation and strength in partnerships. By investing in these cultural industries, we're creating more opportunities for that industry, here and abroad.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As you know, my riding of Oakville is home to Sheridan College. It's a nationally and internationally renowned training institution, famous for its animation and digital media programs. Through innovative partnerships with the public and private sectors, Sheridan is leading the way with its cutting-edge research while providing students with tremendous learning opportunities. I understand that the fund which the minister speaks of assists Ontario's creative industries by promoting collaboration between commercial theatre, music, book and magazine publishing, film, television and the media industries. The innovative research at Sheridan College seems to be consistent with the purpose

of the entertainment and creative cluster partnerships fund.

Can the minister explain how Sheridan College's research and expertise qualifies for a grant through this fund?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I am very happy to advise my colleague from Oakville that Sheridan College indeed recently received a project grant from our government's entertainment and creative cluster partnerships fund. Sheridan College, in connection with DGC Ontario, FilmOntario and Filmport, received a \$300,000 grant to launch the creative previsualization unit. This unit, just so all of you will know better what is meant by that, will establish a facility for previsualization research and training for film and television and other screen-based media in Ontario. It combines the latest technologies, including 3D modelling and motion capture systems, as well as technologies for rapid modelling. This project is one that will promote collaboration and new approaches, and it will again help us—

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

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, under your government, Ontario lost 66,000 jobs last month. Since your election, hundreds of thousands of jobs have disappeared in Ontario.

Many of those have been in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke: Smurfit-MBI, 139 jobs; Timminco, which used to employ as many as 500, now closed; ATC Panels, 130 jobs; TeleTech, 329 jobs. In the forestry sector, thousands of jobs have already gone or are threatened.

Your plan is not working, Premier. Will you please bring forth a new plan, or are you just going to continue to ignore the needs of rural Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We are very appreciative of everything that folks living in rural Ontario do to create for themselves the best quality of life and to contribute to an extraordinary quality of life that we enjoy here in Ontario. I know that they too have been affected by this global economic crisis and they are experiencing some of its impact here in the province of Ontario, as we are in urban Ontario as well.

One of the most important things that we are going to continue to do is to invest in infrastructure. I talked about that \$9.9 billion for infrastructure that we're investing in fiscal 2007-08, which is this year. Part of that is \$1.8 billion through our municipal partners. While the member is putting his supplementary to me, I'm going to see if I can find in this very lengthy list some of the projects that are specific to his riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, infrastructure is important, there's no question about that, but that is not going to save jobs in those industries in Renfrew county that are most threatened. When I talk to people like Dean

Felhaber of Hokum lumber, or Bill Hall, who is 78 years old and considering getting out of the forestry business because he cannot survive any longer, they tell me that it has never been worse in 50 years.

You need to come up with a plan, and not your eastern Ontario economic development plan, which has seen one application from Renfrew county because the thresholds are so ridiculous that nobody qualifies. You need to sit down with the industry and find out what is going to work for them. You need to sit down with the forest industry in Renfrew county and find out what is going to work for them, not for you and your bureaucrats. Talk to the people who are affected. This industry is in trouble. It is up to you to come forth with something and come forth soon, before we don't have a forest industry in Renfrew county.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't help but admire my honourable colleague's passion. I think we all want to do everything that we can to help our constituents in these trying times.

But back to what I referenced a moment ago, I note that, through our infrastructure spending in the city of Pembroke, we're talking \$1.325 million. Just by way of example, in the county of Renfrew at this time, we're working on the emergency rehabilitation of the Latchford Bridge. In the town of Renfrew, we're working on the rehabilitation of the Hall Avenue trunk sanitary sewer. Those are just a couple of specific examples that are putting the people to work in the local community.

1120

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. A group of parents are sitting here in the members' gallery. They are here to tell me and others about their daily struggles and the barriers they face to care for their developmentally disabled adult children. The government promised to support these parents through programs like special services at home, the Passport initiative, and the innovative residential model initiative, but so far, these parents have been left out in the cold, just like so many parents across Ontario. Will this government explain to these parents why it has failed to assist them in their struggle to care for their own adult children?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the member for his question.

I want to say to the parents, thank you for all of the work that you're doing with your children. I know that it's a very difficult task that you have.

This government is here to help these parents and these adult children who have developmental disabilities, yes, through different programs that this government has invested and continues to invest in. As part of the 2008 budget, we are investing \$15 million in one-time funding for capital projects to support community agencies and \$7 million for the developmental area. So we are provid-

ing money to open more beds for these individuals, more group homes, and to the Passport program we're investing money to help—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: This minister claims that the government has made it easy for families in crisis. She rhymes off programs as if they were actually doing something. These parents, like Leonard Neiberg and Petra Moore, who are here today, have been on waiting lists for these programs for years and they can't get to the top. And when they get near the top, the programs are cancelled.

Minister, parents are caring for their developmentally disabled adult children, and they're not getting what they deserve and have been promised over and over by your government. Will the minister please explain to Leonard and Petra why she has so grossly underfunded the services they need to assist them in caring for the disabled kids in their own home?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me correct a comment. There has been no program that has been cancelled. On the contrary, in 2005 this government started the Passport program, which was non-existent when this member and this party was in power. This Passport program was developed in 2005, and since 2005, we have invested over \$27 million in annualized funding, and we are helping more than 2,000 individuals. This program has been very successful.

We know that there are parents and children out there who are waiting for these services, and this government will continue to invest in these programs—special services at home, the Passport program—and to open new group homes for those who cannot stay at home.

SNOWMOBILING

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is directed toward the Minister of Tourism.

Ontario is known for its year-round tourism experiences throughout the province and boasts a great deal to see and do, regardless of the season. However, as winter is slightly ahead of the official schedule, I believe that it's important to highlight some of the winter sports and activities our great province is known for. Snowmobiling, for example, is a pastime that is favoured throughout the province, and every year many Ontarians spend time exploring the extensive trail system that this province has to offer.

Most of my family—my wife and I, our children and their families—is involved in the snowmobiling community, acting as volunteers for trail maintenance and snowmobile trail wardens.

Snowmobiling is a great way to see the province for those who love—

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I want to thank the member for Ajax-Pickering. I know he and his family are

very involved in the snowmobiling community, and it is a great community in our province.

Snowmobiling is an important part of the Ontario tourism industry, and as many in this House know—although not everyone knows—Ontario is the home of actually the most extensive network of snowmobile trails in the world, with over 40,000 kilometres of trails in all. Snowmobiling helps attract both international and domestic tourists to our province and generates close to \$1 billion in economic activity annually.

That is why our government has invested just over \$12 million over the last four years through the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. This investment has allowed them to do substantial work on the trails and infrastructure, including trail rehabilitation, bridges and culverts, to really improve the product that we have—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: Again to the Minister of Tourism: The minister has mentioned that the McGuinty government has invested almost \$12 million to maintain Ontario's trail network and to promote snowmobiling as a great outdoor tourism destination.

Some 38 years ago, my wife and I introduced our first child, Jimmy, at one year of age, to snowmobiling. He's still today enjoying snowmobiling weekly with all his friends.

It is important to note, when experiencing Ontario's great trail systems, that safety should be top of mind. Can the minister give this House more information about safety that is available to those who are involved in snowmobiling in this great province of Ontario?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas around this place, and I'm very excited to be talking about snowmobiling today, as the district of Nipissing is expecting another 15 or 20 centimetres. I know the county of Renfrew has lots of snow to welcome its snowmobilers as well.

At this time, it's important to encourage our snowmobilers to consider the safety aspects. Our lakes aren't yet frozen; it's time to be careful when we're out on the snowmobile trails. While we have lots of snow up north, we have to remember the safety is most important. The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs offers a great deal of information on snowmobile safety. They have information around the importance of sober snowmobiling, open-water ice and lake safety, snow blindness, weather conditions, defensive snowmobiling, night riding and how to deal with hypothermia, frostbite and wind chill. I want to thank our partners in the—

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

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Premier. It's snowing in Ottawa right now, and it's expected to snow tomorrow. With talks already broken off, Ottawa's transit system will be paralyzed by a strike tomorrow, making it extremely difficult for 370,000 people

who take OC Transpo daily to get to work. Residents and visitors coming out of pre-Christmas celebrations will be looking for a way home so they don't have to drink and drive but will find no buses available.

In April this year, when the weather was much more hospitable, this Legislature met on Sunday to end a two-day Toronto Transit strike before people returned to work on Monday morning. Your labour minister then told the Legislature, "Most of us cannot afford to be away from work. Many cannot afford the costly alternatives to public transit."

What's good for Toronto is good for Ottawa. Premier, will you put a stop—

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. I'm concerned about this issue as it develops in my hometown, and I agree with the great majority of what my honourable colleague said. I certainly would encourage both sides to come together and to stay together and resolve this, particularly at this time of the year.

I must also say that the municipal transit authority in Ottawa is federally regulated since it is interprovincial. If there was going to be some imposed solution, that would have to come from the federal government, but we're more than prepared to lend whatever assistance and support we might. Our mediators, in particular, are eager to participate in this if we are invited to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: This Liberal government responded in less than 24 hours during the TTC strike with an emergency sitting of the Legislature, yet less than 24 hours from now, the ATU is threatening to strike in Ottawa.

Toronto is the financial capital of Canada, but we're strategically as important as the national seat of our Parliament. We are also twice the geographical size. We're—

Interjections.

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

1130

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appeal, as a suburban rural representative, to you because we are twice the geographical size of the city of Toronto. So I'm going to ask you, will your government commit to ensure there is no interruption of OC Transpo service in the national capital?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think if there is to be an appeal made here today, it would be an appeal made on behalf of all of us to both sides in Ottawa in our public transit system to come together and to find a way through this. There are thousands and thousands of people who rely on our public transit service and who have no alternative. I might also say that from the perspective of a retailer, it is especially important at this time of the year that folks be able to come into the downtown area or to wherever and do their shopping. Finally, I want to say to my colleague, again, if there is a request for a mediator, we are more than prepared to assist in doing whenever we might. But at the end of the day, any responsibility for an imposed solution has to come from the federal government because this is a federally regulated matter.

FOOD SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is to the Premier. In the past year, Ontarians have experienced a listeriosis outbreak. More locally, in my riding, constituents are concerned about the safety of the milk that we drink. Yesterday, the auditor said the government needed to be more vigilant when its lab tests of meat and milk products detected possible sanitation concerns. With Ontarians increasingly concerned about the safety of our food, why is this government being so lax with meat and dairy producers and processors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would say that we certainly welcome the recommendations that the Provincial Auditor has provided to us. I would also reiterate, and it was recognized in the report, that our government has made some significant investments with respect to food safety.

With respect to the particular incidents that the member has referred to, I would say that our ministry has already taken action. We have shared that with some of the media that have called us on this, because food safety has been a priority for us. We will continue to consider the recommendations that have been made by the provincial auditor so that we can continue to move the yardstick for food safety in the province of Ontario forward. We have come a great distance and we will continue to work to implement a strong health and safety regulatory system for food in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The auditor said, "A number of abattoirs and free-standing meat processors were found to have major and serious deficiencies," some at the rate of 30%. With dairy producers, licences were renewed before the inspections were even completed. With at least 15 Ontarians dead from the listeriosis outbreaks and residents in my community worried about the safety of the milk that they drink, when will this government act to ensure that all of Ontario's food is safe?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would say to the honourable member that it has been this government that has acted to implement a regulatory regimen to ensure that our food is safe. While the Food Safety and Quality Act was passed in 2001, it was proclaimed in 2005, and our government has acted to implement those regulations. We have also put forward \$25 million to help those free-standing meat processors comply. In fact, one of your colleagues not so many months ago took our government to task for actually applying the new regulatory standard for free-standing meat processors and abattoirs. She called us butchers over here on this side of the House.

We are committed to implementing food safety regulations in the province of Ontario. We will continue to work with the Ontario Independent Meat Processors, with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. We will pay very close attention to what the Provincial Auditor has highlighted, because—

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

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to take this opportunity to welcome, in the members' gallery west, Bob Huget, the member from Sarnia in the 35th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen's Park today, Bob.

The time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Again, I would like to introduce some friends who are visiting us today from the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance. They're here in the members' east gallery. I'm sure we all want to have the opportunity to go downstairs today, thank them for visiting the Legislature and pick up some of those great greenhouse veggies and poinsettias.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to welcome a couple of guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery, Scott Anderson and Wendy Farmer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yesterday's report of the Auditor General pointed to continuing problems with the funding of children's mental health services in Ontario. Until last year, annual ministry funding increases have been minimal or non-existent. The government finally gave a 5% increase last year, but this barely made up for the zero you gave the year before. By giving minimal, across-the-board increases and providing funding for new initiatives without any needs assessments, you are creating inequities in funding. Children in high-growth areas are not getting the help they need.

Children's needs are increasing, and your government is not keeping up. The agencies delivering children's mental health services told the auditor that funding for their services is eroding. This continues to result in reduced services for children needing mental health support, particularly prevention and early intervention programs designed to reach children before their mental health issues are severe. Agencies have told me of these problems many times, and I am sure they have told the minister and the government the same.

We only want to know: When will the Minister of Children and Youth Services start to speak up and demand that the government give these programs for children the funding they need?

SAM BOUJI

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Mr. Sam Bouji, the CEO of the Global family

of financial companies. Mr. Bouji is a generous contributor to his community, the province and our country.

On November 30, Minister Takhar and I had the pleasure of attending Global's 10th anniversary celebrating that organization's growth and their commitment to communities and the country.

Sam Bouji is well known in many communities for his leadership, charisma and generosity. A large portion of his company's focus is on registered education savings plans that give many students affordable access to post-secondary education. Apart from the numerous donations he has made to community centres, hospitals and non-profit organizations, he was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for his impact on education. Also, the different Global companies contribute to the financial stability of many Canadians. The Global Educational Marketing Corp. is what gives families the ability to plan for their children's education.

Sam Bouji has served our province and the country. For that, I wish him all the luck and all the success for his generosity, because he's always able and willing to give for others. Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to do this statement.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Ms. Laurie Scott: Last Thursday, the opposition asked the Minister of Health Promotion what her ministry got in return for nearly 1.1 million taxpayers' dollars to the Liberal-friendly agency of Bensimon Byrne. She quoted some carefully spun statistics about banning smoking, but didn't answer the question. We asked why taxpayers have paid over \$14,000 per day for media-buying services—no answer. We've asked if she condones the teachers' union of Ontario and OPSEU pension plans investing over \$100 million into the largest tobacco company in the United States—no answer.

Yesterday, we heard the real story from the Auditor General, who tells us that the McGuinty Liberal tobacco policies are reaping wonderful rewards for the underground economy. Taxpayers are on the hook for over \$500 million in lost revenue to these illegal, underground tobacco products. The Liberals continue to punish hard-working, legitimate businesses and families, all the while ignoring the illegal smoke trade and allowing illicit products to be sold to Ontario's children, even on government-owned property.

The Minister of Health Promotion won't answer questions, but maybe she and her Liberal colleagues could explain why their lack of will to do the right thing has increased the consumption of untaxed tobacco products to where they've lost nearly 50% of the tobacco market.

Dalton McGuinty chooses to burden Ontario taxpayers with a \$500-million deficit instead of having the conviction to enforce the law.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: This past Friday there was a coalition, a group, that met and had a press conference

here at Queen's Park. They were called the Colour of Poverty Campaign. They met the day after the Minister of Children and Youth Services released her report on poverty, and they wanted the Legislature to get the message that everything has not been looked at.

They had some very chilling statistics I would like to read into the record. Part of this is from Child Poverty in the GTA by the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

"Poverty is racialized, that is, disproportionate to people of colour who are Canadian-born and newcomers. Among broad ethno-racial groups in the Toronto CMA, the 2000 LICO before-tax rates of child poverty were about:

"—one child in 10 in low income among global European groups;

"—one child in five for East Asian groups;

"—one child in four for aboriginal, South Asian, Caribbean, South and Central American groups;

"—one child in three for children of Arab and West Asian groups; and,

"—one child in two for children of African groups."

They were talking very seriously about what the minister had put forward in her program, and they were asking that we start to collect some very real statistics on this, because the face of child poverty is not just the face of the poor and the young children, it is increasingly a face of colour. They want this to be brought before the Legislature and for the Legislature to start taking a very clear look at this.

WINCHESTER DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Brownell: Yesterday, we celebrated an important anniversary in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Sixty years ago, the Winchester District Memorial Hospital, one of three hospitals in my riding currently undergoing redevelopment, opened its doors.

This rural hospital in Dundas county has served the communities of Winchester and the surrounding area well since 1948. When the redevelopment is complete early next year, the hospital will be able to accommodate up to 30,000 emergency room patients annually.

I had the opportunity to tour the hospital recently and to see first-hand how the redevelopment project is progressing. I was very impressed with what I saw. As I said at the time, the new facility has a very efficient and effective layout plan, with new diagnostic equipment and improved patient care amenities. The hospital board, management and staff are building new partnerships with the Ottawa Hospital and the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. With this, my riding will soon have access to some of the best health care anywhere in Ontario.

I would like to thank the hospital's CEO, Trudy Reid; her team; the hospital board; and the communities of North Dundas and area for their dedication to this project. As Trudy Reid herself stated, "One of the amazing things here is the relationship we've built with the Ministry of Health."

I am proud to continue working with community partners and this government to foster real change and positive results for the people of Winchester and all of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a sad day when you have to get up after the auditor's report—it's very thick; probably the largest report I've seen in my 10 or 15 years here. It was a scathing report on the government's inability to manage—and that's really what it said—in several distinct areas, not just the Highway Traffic Act, but certainly delivering special education, as one example. They've increased spending in that area by 52%, yet are only serving 5% more children with special needs. It's tragic.

There are other symptoms on the horizon for which the government really has no plan. When we're looking at an economy with over 250,000 jobs lost in manufacturing in your community and mine and no response from the government except to talk about bills—for instance, today we talked about a bill on the Coroners Act. We're also talking about two bills on the highway transportation act. These simply are not paying attention—they're dodging and weaving around the real issue of the economy and the jobs of Ontario.

We've had thousands of letters from dealers, parts manufacturers, as well as the auto assembly workers in my riding of Durham. It's a tragic time at this time of year that another 700 jobs were lost at General Motors—very sad. Bill 119 is the most recent bill, which passed an \$11,000 tax on small business. There simply is no plan, and yet the economy at this time of year—I don't see a single plan from the Premier of this province.

1510

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I would like to acknowledge an important announcement that I had the pleasure of making this past Friday in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, on behalf of the Premier and the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky. This announcement was a partnership through the rural economic development program and J.T. Bakeries in Kitchener, which received a grant of \$492,000 through the Newdle project.

Premier McGuinty has articulated that this government fixed the roof while the sun was shining. This means that support of nearly half a million dollars is possible even in these difficult times.

Mike Farwell, the host of Farwell Live and 570 News talk radio, referred to this as a “good-news announcement.” He acknowledged this as a “silver lining in these difficult times,” and Mike Farwell is correct. What this grant means to my riding and to J.T. Bakeries is job stability for 200 existing jobs and job stability for 45 rural jobs.

I'd like to congratulate the partners in this project: Ray Franklin and John Zizzo, of J.T. Bakeries; Derek Jamieson, of New-Life Mills; and OMAFRA.

This grant allows us to look ahead into the future, to continue to be innovative, to continue to form partnerships such as co-op education with the high school across the street, and to continue to bring business and economic security to Kitchener–Conestoga and all of Ontario.

LANSDOWNE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Dave Levac: On Sunday, December 7, I was able to join the record turnout of more than 480 children and parents who came out to participate in the 10th annual Lansdowne Children's Centre Christmas party in Brantford. Some of the activities included the Notre Dame Elementary School choir performance, cookie decorating, face painting, an obstacle course and crafting beautiful angels. The children were able to pet therapy dogs Haven and Lewis, under the watchful eye of Therapeutic Paws of Canada.

Of course, a special appearance by none other than Santa and Mrs. Claus was the highlight of the day. I got to have a photo taken with the famous Christmas couple.

To many of the children and families who depend on the programs and services of Lansdowne Children's Centre, the whole year's events culminated in this joyous year-end celebration.

The Lansdowne Children's Centre provides a safe, positive working environment for its clients and their parents and is like a second home for many. The staff at Lansdowne are simply fantastic.

It is a unique facility that provides in-house therapeutic services and specialists under one roof for children and youth with physical, communication and developmental needs. Indeed, we are very fortunate to have a facility like this in Brantford.

This event would not have been possible without the support and generosity of the rest of our community, including the Rotary Club of Brantford, Lansdowne staff and board, and their families and many volunteers, including the North Park Collegiate Interact Club.

For their unyielding efforts for the children of Lansdowne, I wish to offer my sincere appreciation and gratitude for all their hard work. Merry Christmas, Lansdowne Children's Centre. God bless.

Peace BY PEACE

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise in the House on behalf one of my constituents, Ms. Maygan Chapman, who is the York University Glendon campus director of an exceptional organization called Peace by PEACE.

Peace by PEACE is a not-for-profit, student-run organization at the University of Toronto and York University. Understanding the role that upstanding leaders can play in the lives of young people, Peace by PEACE is dedicated to educating kids in grades 4 through 6 about the benefits of conflict resolution.

Through the use of tireless and highly trained volunteers, the organization conducts role-playing scenarios,

win-win games and arts and crafts activities that challenge young people to deal with their life conflicts in a fun and peaceful way. Through the initiatives put forward by Peace by PEACE, we can feel secure that our future leaders of tomorrow will be equipped with the skills to deal with their problems in a friendly and efficient manner.

I would like to thank Ms. Chapman and her colleagues for their excellent efforts in promoting better communicators in my riding and in communities across Ontario. I ask that everyone in the House and in the province support this organization by visiting their online website and getting involved with this important initiative called Peace by PEACE.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption. I send it to you by way of page Swapnil.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2008 LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to encourage participation in public debate, and dissuade persons from bringing legal proceedings or claims for an improper purpose /
Projet de loi 138, Loi visant à favoriser la participation aux affaires publiques et à empêcher l'introduction d'instances judiciaires ou de demandes dans un but illégitime.

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. Andrea Horwath: This bill is in fact what is considered to be anti-SLAPP legislation in other jurisdictions. The bill protects persons from being subjected to legal proceedings that would stifle their ability to speak out on public issues or to promote, in the public interest, action by the public or by any level of government.

Provision is made in the bill for such legal proceedings to be dismissed at an early stage, for defendants subjected to such proceedings to be indemnified for the costs they incur in responding to those proceedings and for the court or tribunal to award additional damages to those defendants in appropriate circumstances. Communication or conduct constituting public participation is expressly designated as an occasion of qualified privilege in relation to all persons who become aware of that communication or conduct.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2008 LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Mr. Fonseca moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters /
Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

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?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

SECURITIES AMENDMENT ACT (MUTUAL FUNDS), 2008 LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES VALEURS MOBILIÈRES (FONDS MUTUELS)

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 140, An Act to amend the Securities Act with respect to mutual funds /
Projet de loi 140, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières à l'égard des fonds mutuels.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: This bill amends the Securities Act to require mutual funds to establish and maintain an independent board of directors to oversee the activities of the mutual fund and the mutual fund manager, and to act in the best interests of the mutual fund and its security holders.

The bill also amends the act to require certain mutual fund advertisements to disclose the costs and fees charged by the fund to security holders, and to express the difference between the per cent total return of the fund and of the benchmark.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, on a point of order: I believe we have an agreement seeking unanimous consent for a 15-minute recess.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
The House recessed from 1520 to 1536.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm pleased to introduce legislation that would amend the Employment Standards Act to enhance protections for employees working for temporary help agencies and help create opportunities for more temp employees to move to sustainable employment. I would like to give special thanks to my parliamentary assistant, Vic Dhillon, for his hard work.

A few decades ago, temporary help agencies provided workers for short-term clerical jobs. Today, agencies supply workers in a wide range of occupations, and an employee of an agency might be assigned to a single-client business for several months or even years. The nature of work may have changed, but our labour laws and regulations have lagged behind. Our intent is to ensure that Ontario's employment legislation reflects the realities of today's labour market in a balanced and fair way.

Before I outline the provisions of our proposed legislation, I'd like to inform the members of an amendment to a regulation under the Employment Standards Act. Our amended regulation has removed an exemption from public holiday pay that affected many temporary help agency employees. This will come into effect on January 2, 2009. Temp agency employees will have the same rights to public holiday entitlements as other employees in Ontario. If our proposed legislation passes, we intend to make another regulation on royal assent, this time removing the exemptions around termination and severance that affect many temp agency employees.

I will now outline some of the major elements of our proposed legislation. Many people working for temp agencies face barriers to permanent employment. Our approach would remove some of the barriers they may

face, allowing them to seize opportunities if they should arise. If our proposed legislation passes, temporary help agencies would be prohibited from preventing a client from hiring an agency's assignment employee, charging the client a temporary to permanent fee after six months or more have passed since the employee was first assigned to the client; agencies would also be prohibited from charging assignment employees certain fees, including: a fee for taking permanent employment with a client, a fee for becoming an assignment employee, a fee for assistance in finding work with a client or a fee for assistance in preparing a resumé or preparing for job interviews. Since agencies are receiving fees from clients, there is no good reason for them to double-dip and also demand a fee from the employee. It's not right and it's not fair. We want to put an end to this practice.

We would also require agencies to provide the employees, in writing, with the agency's name, contact information and information sheet on the employee's rights. They would also be required to provide in writing the client's name and contact information as well as the wages, benefits, hours of work and pay schedule associated with the assignment and a general description of the work to be performed for the client.

Our proposed legislation would also prohibit clients of agencies from engaging in reprisals against assignment employees for asserting their rights.

1540

Our proposed legislation supports Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, as it is designed to create more opportunities and build a stronger economy. It would put an end to unscrupulous agencies that take advantage of and exploit vulnerable workers.

I believe we have a fair and balanced proposal before the House, and I urge all members to support it.

In closing, I would like to thank all the people who participated in our consultations and whose proposals form the basis of our legislation. Some of them are with us here today: Deena Ladd and her members from the Workers' Action Centre, and Mary Gellatly from Parkdale Community Legal Services, and some of her members. I thank them very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm rising today on behalf of the official opposition to respond to the Minister of Labour's announcement of a few minutes ago regarding changes to the Employment Standards Act, and also changes to some of the regulations regarding temporary workers.

In general, we are supportive of the government's efforts to offer protection to workers in temporary agencies, and look forward to the debate on this bill. However, we do have concerns about some of the unintended consequences of the government's announcements. First, I would have to wonder why the government would announce changes to the regulations today, December 9,

that do not come into effect until January 2. It seems to me that there are going to be many temporary workers who are going to expect to be paid for Christmas and other holidays, and are going to be out of luck. You can't tell me that the extra week is going to make a difference, and whether temporary agencies are ready to pay for these statutory holidays or not. What I think this is going to do is create a lot of confusion for temporary workers and their employers.

The other question I have is, does the government know how much these changes are going to cost temporary agencies and, in turn, their clients? Has the government done the cost analysis that they should have done before they introduced this bill and these regulatory changes? Or have they simply decided upon a course of action without doing their homework, like with their recent bill on the WSIB, Bill 119?

It's also interesting to point out that the temporary workers hired for this very government were not allowed to apply for permanent jobs. This government itself refused to afford them the rights that they now wish to include in this bill. So I would certainly hope that the government will remove barriers for temporary workers within our own government of Ontario as well as elsewhere.

While we will work with the government on protecting temporary workers, we also think it is important not to demonize the good temporary agencies that are out there. If you look at the increase in the number of temporary workers today, you can see how that has become an option which businesses are now turning to for staffing solutions. I am sure that there are many good temporary agencies out there, and there are also good employers. Yet, the government hasn't mentioned them here today, but instead it lumps all of these businesses in with the bad apples that do exist.

On our side of the House, we hope that the government will listen to industry associations and also work with them on relieving some of their anxiety over these changes announced today. I know that the minister has a reputation of consulting with groups impacted by government decisions, but also has not taken the time to deal with those industry groups that are affected, for example, in Bill 119. However, I hope that he will turn over a new leaf, listen to this industry and try to come to a compromise that can see the industry continue to be successful, and for the betterment of all Ontario workers.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: If there has been progress today made by our friends on the other side, it's certainly due to the incredible work that has been done by Workers' Action Centre—Deena Ladd and Mary Gellatly; and not only Workers' Action Centre but the Ontario Federation of Labour, Toronto and York Region Labour Council, and CLC with their Good Jobs Summit and the thousands of members that were there. Certainly a great deal of work has gone into this. We in the New Democratic Party

would have liked to see a quantum leap rather than a baby step. What we see here is a baby step.

In fact, when I used to work in the agency business, back in pre-Harris days, there were no fees allowed to be charged to applicants after six months. Those who were working on a temporary basis for most of the larger agencies were not charged, or the client companies were not charged an extra fee for taking them on permanently. So only with this government would a step backward be a step forward.

What we need, and we need incredible action and we need it soon, is for the almost one in two Ontarians who work in precarious employment, for the 700,000 Ontarians who work through temp agencies. Almost 10% of the workforce works through temp agencies. This is astronomical; this is frightening. Most people work in precarious employment.

So when you look at CUPE 3903, who are on strike at York University, you have people with Ph.Ds. reapplying for their jobs every single year, and this will not help them at all. When you look at janitors who are being forced to take out their own incorporation papers and become client companies de facto and earn under minimum wage—because they really are workers even though they are called contractors—certainly SEIU and Justice for Janitors, this will not help them at all. For all of those who aren't working through temporary agencies, this will not help them at all.

Will it help collect holiday pay? Yes, it will. That's a good thing. Will it stop some of the most egregious offences of temporary agencies? Yes, it will.

But what do we want in the New Democratic Party? What do all socially conscious workers and activists want? We want equal pay for equal work. Tomorrow is the day that we celebrate, around the world, human rights. It is a human right to have equal pay for equal work. This bill does not give workers equal pay for equal work. You could be a temp working in accounts payable sitting right next to somebody who is earning \$15 an hour while you're earning \$12. This bill will not help that worker. That worker in that accounts payable job will still be paid \$3 less than the full-time worker. That university professor working on contract will still make less.

What else do we want? We want pay equity. Women make 71 cents for every dollar that men make in this province, and the equity commission has been calling for absolute funding for what they need so that they can actually enforce the law that is now 20 years old. It's not in force. This baby step will not help with pay equity.

It will not help with the living wage. We do not have a living wage in this province. If you are making minimum wage, you are not able to live above the poverty line. If this government was serious about its anti-poverty measures, the first thing it would do would be to raise the minimum wage to at least \$10.25 right now. That's the poverty line.

Of course, there's the question of enforcement. I just received the bill; I haven't yet read the fine print, so we don't know if there is a poison pill in here, but we want

to know about enforcement. We want to know if there are going to be adequate fines for breaking this law. Also, we want to see this law enforced.

We in the New Democratic Party want to sit next week, and we want to debate this bill and pass this bill this session. We don't want to wait a month, maybe two, maybe three, to see this bill come to pass. We want to pass it now. If this government was interested in workers' rights, they would want to see it passed now too, and wouldn't prorogue this House without passing it. Instead of taking a two-month vacation when workers don't get one, why don't we come back next week, work hard, pass this bill and see, as the member just said, that these workers get their Christmas pay and these workers get the justice that's due them?

This is certainly an equal playing field for temporary agencies. What we want to see is an equal playing field for all workers—equal pay for equal work—and let's pass this immediately.

Thank you, Workers' Action, for coming out and thank you for all your hard work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Our guests are always welcome to the Legislature. We certainly allow you to observe, but we ask that you not participate.

PETITIONS

LOGGING ROUTE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with logging in 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

"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 alternate 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.

FOCUS COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition from Focus Community program.

"Whereas the Focus Community program has been effectively working with communities across Ontario for the health of Ontarians by preventing injury and harm in relation to drug and alcohol use since 1991; and

"Whereas the Focus Community program funding cycle ended on March 31, 2008, and the project's extension funding will end on March 31, 2009; and

"Whereas the Focus Community program has been waiting for a decision from the Ministry of Health Promotion about continued funding. Without a decision, the Focus Community program cannot make plans, develop a budget, or make commitments with community partners;

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

"That the Ministry of Health Promotion renew the funding of the Focus Community program for an extended period so that they can continue the good work they have been providing for the past 17 years."

I certainly agree with this and will affix my signature and give it to Zac to deliver.

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ROCHE-NCE, a consulting firm hired to study potential sites for an interprovincial crossing between Ottawa and Gatineau, is recommending that an interprovincial bridge across the Ottawa River be built at Kettle Island, connecting to the scenic Aviation Parkway in Ottawa, turning it into a four-lane commuter and truck route passing through downtown residential communities. Along the proposed routes are homes, seniors' apartments, schools, parks, the Montfort long-term-care facility and the Montfort Hospital, all of which will be severely impacted by noise, vibration and disease-causing air pollution. A truck and commuter route through neighbourhoods is a safety issue because of the increased risk of pedestrians and cyclists and the transport of hazardous materials, and there are other, more suitable corridors further east, outside of the downtown core, which would have minimal impact on Ottawa residents;

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

"To reject the recommendation of a bridge at Kettle Island and to select a more suitable corridor to proceed to phase two of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study."

I affix my signature to this petition and send it to the table via page Jacqueline.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Mr. Robert Bailey: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds the school health support service through community care access centres across this province for

children with special needs who require physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language therapy in public schools and in private and home schools; and

“Whereas the Minister of Children and Youth Services envisions an Ontario where all children and youth have the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential; and....

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately transfer funding and responsibility for this delivery of school health support service to school-aged children with complex and multiple disabilities from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and community access care centres to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it and send it down to the table with Samantha.

FOCUS COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition and it reads:

“Whereas the Focus Community program has been effectively working with communities across Ontario for the health of Ontarians by preventing injury and harm in relation to drug and alcohol use since 1991; and

“Whereas the Focus Community program funding cycle ended on March 31, 2008, and the project’s extension funding will end on March 31, 2009; and

“Whereas the Focus Community program has been waiting for a decision from the Ministry of Health Promotion about continued funding. Without a decision, the Focus Community program cannot make plans, develop a budget, or make commitments with community partners;

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

“That the Ministry of Health Promotion renew the funding of the Focus Community program for an extended period so that they can continue the good work they have been providing for the past 17 years.”

This has been signed by literally hundreds of residents from across northern Ontario, and I—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Petitions? The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I’m so disappointed that you have to look it up. Maybe I should stand up more often.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I’d like to thank Susan O’Neill of Osprey Boulevard in Lisgar for having collected the signatures. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the

ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Amanda to carry it for me.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of the member from Halton, Mr. Chudleigh. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the ‘near monopoly’ of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for” all “retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

“Whereas The Beer Store ‘near monopoly’ is controlled by ‘for-profit, foreign-owned companies’ and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

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

“That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store,” the near monopoly, “thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario.”

I’m pleased to sign this and submit it with Bradyn.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to recognize Tom Longboat Day in Ontario.

“Whereas Tom Longboat, a proud son of the Onondaga Nation” in the city of Brantford “was one of the most internationally celebrated athletes in Canadian history;

“Whereas Tom Longboat was voted athlete of the 20th century by Maclean’s magazine for his record-breaking marathon and long-distance triumphs against the world’s best;

“Whereas Tom Longboat fought for his country in World War I and was wounded twice during his tour of duty;

“Whereas Tom Longboat is a proud symbol of the outstanding achievements and contributions of Canada’s aboriginal people;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize June 4 as Tom Longboat Day in Ontario.”

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

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I’m pleased to present the latest batch of petitions to bring health card renewal services closer to Glanbrook residents. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

“Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

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

“To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton.”

I assign my signature in support.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on behalf of the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre.

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

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

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery

centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I give this to page Sahara and put my signature to it.

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DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Toby Barrett: These petitions are titled “Delhi Wants Its MTO Office Back.”

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the community of Delhi has historically had a driver’s licence issuing office; and

“Whereas the current government set out a request for proposal for a new operator of a driver’s licence issuing office in Delhi;

“Whereas many individuals in the town of Delhi responded to the RFP and paid \$68 in application fees to the Ontario government; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government, after collecting this money from Delhi citizens, has decided against reopening an issuing office in Delhi;

“Whereas the residents of Delhi are currently being forced to drive 20 kilometres to the nearest issuing office;

“We, the undersigned, demand the McGuinty government revisit the proposals already received and reopen an office to meet the needs of residents within the community.”

I went door-to-door to get some of these petitions and I’ll affix my name to it.

FOCUS COMMUNITY PROGRAM

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Petitions? The member for Niagara.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Niagara, Welland—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —Welland–Thorold, old Mel Swart’s former riding.

I have a petition that reads:

“Whereas the Focus Community program has been effectively working with communities across Ontario for the health of Ontarians by preventing injury and harm in relation to drug and alcohol use since 1991; and

“Whereas the Focus Community program funding cycle ended on March 31, 2008, and the project’s extension funding will end on March 31, 2009; and

“Whereas the Focus Community program has been waiting for a decision from the Ministry of Health Promotion about continued funding. Without a decision, the Focus Community program cannot make plans, develop a budget or make commitments with community partners;

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

“That the Ministry of Health Promotion renew the funding of the Focus Community program for an ex-

tended period so they can continue the good work they have been providing for the past 17 years.”

Thousands of signatures, many from Niagara region, Welland and Port Colborne included, and I have affixed my signature as well.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have more petitions from the people of the Bathurst Heights learning centre, the ESL learning centre.

“Whereas the growing number”—

Oh, that’s the wrong one. Wait a minute. Here it is.

“Whereas there are over 2,000 adult ESL students being served by the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre, operated by the Toronto District School Board, in partnership with the province of Ontario;

“Whereas this is the only English as a second language (ESL) learning centre in this area of the city located directly on the Spadina subway line, making it accessible for students across the city;

“Whereas newcomers in Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in their career opportunities;

“Whereas the proposed revitalization of Lawrence Heights threatens the existence of the centre;

“Therefore we, the undersigned,” request “that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location.”

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

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Robert Bailey: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 117, presented by MPP Helena Jaczek on October 27, 2008, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers” so that no passenger “shall drive or operate a motorcycle on a highway if another person under the age of 14 years is a passenger...;

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

“That Bill 117 be removed from the agenda and never become law.”

There are hundreds of petitions here. I’ll affix my name to this one and send it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion respecting concurrence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion with respect to concurrences in supply. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: That the orders for concurrence and supply for the various ministries, as represented by government orders 14 through 25, inclusive, be called and debated concurrently, and

That the time available to 5:50 p.m. be divided equally among the recognized parties, at which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of each order for concurrence, and

That any required divisions on any of the orders for concurrence in supply shall be deferred to deferred votes, such votes to be taken in succession with one five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Government order 14, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade;

Government order 15, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs;

Government order 16, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

Government order 17, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines;

Government order 18, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Research and Innovation;

Government order 19, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Labour;

Government order 20, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs;

Government order 21, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance;

Government order 22, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities;

Government order 23, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy;

Government order 24, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal;

Government order 25, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Pickering—no, Scarborough—Pickering.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Pickering—Scarborough East.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pickering—Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker. I was actually having some fun with that. I know that often ridings with multiple names make it confusing, particularly when they cross boundaries. I was going to suggest that I change the name of my riding to Toronto—Durham, but I had a discussion at the Toronto caucus meeting and

they weren't really that keen on the idea, nor was my friend across the floor from Ajax–Pickering in Durham. I didn't even have the chance to debate it with the actual member from Durham, within Durham region, so I guess I'll have to stay, at least for the time being, with Pickering–Scarborough East as the riding.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: “Toronto–Durham” sort of encapsulated a larger geography, but I know that Toronto caucus members weren't quite as keen on the idea.

It's a pleasure today to be able to speak to the concurrence motion. It is an opportunity, in part, to speak to some of the activities, accomplishments and initiatives of our government. It's a chance to speak, at least briefly, on some of the initiatives that have come out of government over a period of time as we've built on a program of success in the province of Ontario, and in some parts a good opportunity as well to speak to how the initiatives of the government and of the 2008-09 budget have, to some extent, sort of foreseen the economic climate in which we find ourselves now, and how some of those decisions are helping to, at the very least, mitigate some of the impacts that would otherwise be upon us, despite the things that are happening out there in the economy at this point in time.

The initiatives of the McGuinty government since 2003 through to now in the areas of health—not to exclude the initiatives in any way of the concurrent fiscal year, the 2008-09 budget year—have been one of the key focuses on improving access to health care within the province of Ontario. There are literally dozens of projects—100 plus—that have either been initiated, completed, are operational, are currently in the process of construction or are on the books and committed for that type of initiative. I can reference those in particular in my own riding that serve the constituents of my riding, whether it be the Ajax-Pickering site of the Rouge Valley Health System or the Centenary site. Both of those have seen the benefit of construction for renewal and enhancement, which is going to provide an improved level of health care for my constituents at both of those sites, but in doing that have at the same time also provided a window of opportunity for significant public investment.

With that public investment has come a tremendous number of construction-related jobs currently, not to speak of the need to do the planning and initiatives to actually equip those facilities when the time comes and provide the staffing that will be necessary to use those facilities and that equipment to provide the quality of health care that one needs.

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I had the opportunity in the past few weeks, along with member from Ajax–Pickering, to visit the Ajax site currently under construction that exists within his riding, which serves particularly the constituents in our two ridings, to see the work that is being done by those construction crews at this point in time and get a real sense of the renewal, expansion and opportunities that exist in that particular facility and, as the work is completed, how

it's going to serve our constituents well with the tens of millions of dollars that are being invested, some of which obviously are flowing through this particular budget year as part of the process in which members, through estimates, had a chance to query various ministries on their initiatives.

Health-related projects are helping to prop up our economy at this point in time, keeping people in the workforce, doing the planning necessary to equip those facilities as they come on stream and providing opportunities for long-term employment of skilled people within the province of Ontario to actually provide the necessary services that so many families want and look toward.

There are a number of other things we have focused on over time; these types of initiatives that are going to help. The shortening of wait times: We launched those initiatives and made those transparent, so the public can see exactly what we've been doing in regard to shortening of wait times, and can assess and measure those and find opportunities to take advantage of that.

We have taken particular initiatives in the areas of promoting health and preventing illness. The smoke-free Ontario initiatives have very aggressively set out opportunities to reduce smoking within the province of Ontario. I think we're seeing, as time goes on, the type of success that is having as more and more people move away from the use of tobacco in this province. It doesn't come easily and it doesn't come quickly, but it's part of the ongoing initiatives and investments that governments make when they set out a series of priorities and work toward seeing those priorities actually put in place.

The 2008-09 budget proposed an investment of some \$40.5 billion in Ontario's health care sector. That's an increase of over \$11 billion since the 2003-04 time frame, more than a one-third increase in investment in health care in this province. We're seeing the changes that that type of investment brings about in the province of Ontario. We're seeing people who are healthier, people who are taking their health more conscientiously, people who are getting access to health care in a quicker and more effective fashion. We're seeing the types of analysis and diagnosis that we weren't seeing four and five years ago and people being treated for illnesses that are occurring.

We committed to things like providing additional personal support workers in long-term-care facilities. That's an area that's so critically important to continue to invest in as well, and this budget document provided for that. All of us in this place want to ensure as best as we can that the seniors in our communities have the type of support and dignity that come with age. Sometimes that can be accommodated in a home setting. At other times, it requires that people to move into long-term-care home settings, where there's a higher level of support than might be available with family, friends or neighbours, and care that the individual might not be able to provide for themselves.

Having those additional support workers available to them in those settings provides for that dignity, that

quality of life that seniors have worked so hard and so dearly earned in the province of Ontario. Our investments in the 2008-09 budget and the ongoing initiatives since we took office are helping to establish a framework where seniors have that dignity as they move through the latter stages of life, when their care needs become even greater.

Among the chronic disease areas of prevention and management strategies that one needs to look at, I recall the early debates in my limited tenure in this place, through private members' bills, when we talked about and had private members' support from all sides of this House for insulin pumps. Over time, that initiative was adopted. Initially, the youth in this community were eligible for insulin pumps, and now that's being extended into the adult community as well.

I had the opportunity just in the past week to be speaking with a constituent whose son was diagnosed as a diabetic in his early youth, at 11 or 12 years old, and now that he's in his late 20s he is eligible to have an insulin pump strategy and is going through, I understand, a very rigorous process to establish whether or not he is a suitable candidate. It's not that everyone is necessarily eligible for this type of treatment, but the capacity to have it there is so important because it will—if this individual finds that he's able to be a good candidate for the insulin pump—normalize his life in a fashion that he hasn't had over so many years. So these are important investments and important initiatives. Sometimes they come from government, and sometimes they come right out of this place, from individual members on each and every side of the House with good ideas that end up in debate and become part of the strategy, ultimately, of government, and result in the kinds of investments that will improve health care throughout the province of Ontario.

The government in this particular budgetary cycle—part of the debate that has gone on—has committed some \$120 million, to be spent over the next three years for hospitals in high-growth and high-population areas, to meet the demands of that growth. We hear petitions on a very regular basis. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville—I checked to be sure it's Mr. Delaney's riding—who was just on his feet not that long ago, has a series of petitions and he reads them pretty regularly. He even gets some support from other members to read them, about the needs of health care in his community, a high-growth area within the province of Ontario. He likes to bring that to our attention on a regular basis. A commitment of over \$120 million over three years for those high-growth communities will certainly help to alleviate some of the stressors that are occurring there. Through the LHIN structure, those monies will be dispensed, within those communities, to those hospitals to provide the levels of care that we would all want to see, and put some emphasis on high-growth areas within the province of Ontario.

We made a commitment to extending, to nursing graduates, opportunities for full-time employment, which had a tremendous uptake in and of itself. We don't want

highly trained, skilled people—nurses that we so desperately need in this province—to leave. We don't want them to leave because they can't find the type of employment and structure that they need, either as individuals to have the lifestyle they want, or to support families as part of a family structure. We don't want them to leave the province. We want them to have the opportunity to work and build careers right here. That's the commitment and initiative to full-time employment for new nursing graduates, so that they wouldn't look to other jurisdictions for places of employment. They would look right here in their own province, in their own communities, in their own hometowns, serving constituents, family, friends, neighbours that they would have met over the years and serving them in their local hospitals on a full-time basis.

The investments continue, particularly in the health care area. Obviously, when you're spending \$40 billion, a very significant amount of a provincial budget, and certainly when you look at a \$90-billion-plus budget, you're over the 40% mark; you're in the range of 45% of your budget going to provide service and health care in the province of Ontario to our collective constituents. Those investments are spread around, obviously, a huge, huge number of areas as each of us uses, our families use and touch base with and are affected by—the need for health care, everything from emergencies that we have very unexpectedly occurring to us or to our families, when the system has to be there to support us through birth, throughout our life, through chronic diseases, through acute disease, through to the long-term care and the ultimate ending of our lives when, in many cases, we find ourselves in care of either our hospital structures or our long-term-care structures.

One of the initiatives that governments, over a period of time, have invested in and continue to invest in are strategies around electronic health and electric health systems. We're now referring to it as eHealth Ontario; it has other names at other times. We need to continue those investments. We need to build upon the work that has been done in the past, and this year's budget is doing that as the budget year continues. We're continuing those investments in eHealth strategies, ideally so that one of these days we'll have an eHealth record that will track us. We'll have something that our physician will be able to call up and gain access to, that he or she will be able to readily transmit electronically to other health care provider systems. They'll be able to access our records, and you and I won't find ourselves going to our family doctor and being sent off, as we have to be anyway, for an X-ray, as the case might be, and then picking up the hard copy and delivering it to the hospital. There will be in place a much better structure for that to occur through the eHealth-related systems as the skills and the technology improves, and as our capacity to bring those elements together and protect the individual's privacy, which is always one of the key elements of this discussion. But to continue that process, whether it's on the individual basis for our own individual records or whether it's the lab information that needs to be moved or the drug infor-

mation that needs to be moved around, it's critically important to our investments on a go-forward basis. We're making, have been making and continue to make significant investments in the health care system in the province of Ontario, and this year, 2008-09, has been no different than any other year in that regard.

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We need to continue, as a province and as a government, to invest in various sectors of our province, not the least of which are our rural and northern communities. Part of our investment structure this year has been to ensure that some priority is given to our rural and northern communities within the province of Ontario. We committed some \$450 million during this budgetary cycle in municipal infrastructure for priority municipal capital projects. It includes some \$400 million for municipal roads and bridges in communities outside of Toronto. People often think of Toronto as being something of the centre. As we sit here and do our work here, it's quite easy for us to get caught up in the Toronto area, particularly for those of us who live within the Golden Horseshoe area and see this as more of the centre. I think it's important for the members around here and for government in structuring budgets to keep a very keen eye on the rest of the province of Ontario and those small municipalities. I know that members throughout this House hold the feet of government to the fire in question periods and other times as they query the ministers to ensure that the ministers and government don't forget the importance of rural Ontario and don't allow oversight in that fashion to forget about the importance of our rural communities.

Among the types of strategies that were put in place in this budgetary cycle to support our ongoing initiatives are things like the new distance grant for post-secondary education to assist with travel costs for those who live in distant parts of the province of Ontario to be able to get to the places they want to and who are eligible to attend a school to enhance their education, to build upon things like the Reaching Higher plan to ensure that young people in particular have opportunities for post-secondary education. We want to ensure that there's reasonable access for all Ontarians to that, and thus the inclusion of a new distance grant is an important part of that process.

We looked at the province of Ontario, we looked at more remote parts of province, areas that are of particular interest to us. We looked at areas like Thunder Bay for new research and innovation opportunities in the bio-economy, focusing on forestry, which is an area where we've had considerable debate in this House as it struggles. We committed some \$25 million to create in Thunder Bay the Centre for Research and Innovation. We took a look at places like Sault Ste. Marie and determined that a \$15-million investment there to support the establishment of the Centre for Invasive Alien Species Management was a good investment for the province of Ontario, but equally a good investment for the community of Sault Ste. Marie and that part of northern Ontario.

We've committed to \$30 million over four years to enhance broadband access in rural areas in southern

Ontario. All of these investments aren't in the north; there certainly are a lot of areas in southern Ontario that are distinctly rural and that need our continued support, and certainly broadband is one of those. If we are to continue to move into the new economies, the economies that we will see emerging following the current economic downturn, we're going to need to be on top of the technology that allows us to communicate more effectively. There's no more reason that someone in a rural community shouldn't have access to broadband, if one can put in it place, than anyone in an urban community. There's no more reason that a person in a rural southern Ontario community shouldn't have the opportunity to conduct their business in a fast, effective and efficient fashion when it demands of them access to that technology than someone living in a large urban centre. The investments that we're making in broadband are going to serve us well, not only in the coming year, two years, five years, but they will serve us well in the next generation of work within the province of Ontario, and I would hope and expect that we'll continue those types of investments as we move forward.

We need to continue investing in the business climate, in the tax climate, and that's the reason why our business education tax reductions were accelerated in northern Ontario. We recognize the 30,000 businesses in some 85 northern municipalities are meeting their own issues, their own constraints. They've been faced with what we're facing in other parts of the province, probably earlier. We recognize the need to expedite our efforts on reducing business education taxes in those communities at an earlier stage, as a way to support those businesses. These will be good investments, some \$70 million over three years in savings, as a result of this acceleration of the business education tax in those northern communities.

There are any number of initiatives the government has undertaken. I know that during estimates there were opportunities in that standing committee for members from all sides of the House to query government, query ministers, particularly as chosen by each of the parties, on what they put before this House, what they included in their budget, and whether or not those things are meeting the priorities within the province of Ontario.

I had the chance, during my early couple of years in this place, to sit on estimates. I had the opportunity then to hear from ministers in many of the ministries over those two or three years—not necessarily each and every one of them, as they're restricted annually. It certainly gives you the opportunity in that process, as they complete that work and report back to this Legislature, to understand the depth of knowledge not only that they have to acquire as ministers in their ministry in respect to their budget, but also the expertise that has been built in this large enterprise, the government of the province of Ontario, the public service, the deputy ministers, the assistant deputy ministers, those managers and directors who have specific responsibilities, and how intently involved they are in ensuring that the dollars that are

provided to them or through them to the people of the province of Ontario—that they have responsibility for how seriously they take their work, how dedicated they are to getting that work done well and to ensuring the dollars spent are dollars spent in an effective fashion on behalf of the constituents. The public service, in that regard, is to be commended and should be commended on a regular basis for the work that they do on behalf of the constituents of the province of Ontario, and on behalf of this legislation, particularly on behalf of the government of the day, whoever that government might be.

I'm pleased that I have had a few minutes to speak on the matter of concurrence today. I'm looking forward to the vote that we will have later today on the agreement that exists for the sharing of time amongst all the three parties. We look forward, certainly those of us in the House who are going to be most directly engaged in the development of the next round of the budgets—and I see members from each side who will be participating in our pre-budget consultations as the legislative committee that will re-engage again this Thursday for the third day in the city of Toronto. Next week, we'll be travelling throughout the province of Ontario to hear from folks about what their priorities are as individuals and organizations in the current economic climate.

We have to continue to invest in this province. We have to continue to keep focused on priorities in the province, and this is an important part of that process, to ensure that we have an opportunity to speak to what's transpiring in the province at this point in time, to ensure that we're spending the tax dollars of the people of the province in a wise and judicious fashion, based on what their priorities are within the province.

It has been a pleasure. I just had a few minutes in respect to the concurrence motion, and I look forward to continuing the debate today.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we debate supply and concurrences, I wish to touch on a number of financial issues, ranging from this government's lack of ability to deal with the financial decline that we're now seeing—a financial decline that this government has been warned about for the past year or so—to its inability to step up to the plate for the auto sector that's bleeding jobs and revenue.

I wish to touch on this government's refusal to enforce tobacco tax laws. I know concurrences also deals with, obviously, finance and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. You don't enforce those laws, and we've now got a reading from the Auditor General: It has put us \$500 million in the hole. That's just what can be measured. I'm not sure what public servant is willing to go out to some of the native communities and actually do an accurate measurement. We've got a reading of half a billion dollars in the hole. It may well be \$1 billion in lost tax revenues; nobody really knows. With this government's continued lack of action, that particular hole is really becoming a bottomless pit in which we find our-

selves now labelled as a have-not province, with no plan to get out.

1630

Clearly, as we consider supply and concurrences, we're talking about dealing with the allocation of scarce resources, and a number of questions emerge: To what extent do we allow this government, while the House is not in session, to continue on its path of spending, a path that we now see written in red ink? To what extent do we allow government to continue unchecked while employers across the province are being forced to cut jobs, cut back, close their doors in many cases, because of the brutal economic climate within the province of Ontario?

There has been close to five years of government action now against tobacco farmers in my area—jacking up taxes—coupled with lack of action with respect to other farm commodities. I think of hogs, beef, horticultural crops.

More recently, and this would be going back now two and a half years, the land dispute crisis has pretty well knocked the feet out from under the economy in my riding, particularly in Haldimand county and in the neighbouring government-held riding, the riding of Brant, in Brantford.

Now, due in large part to lack of a proper plan, a failure to read the signs and a tax-and-spend-more-and-more mentality, the rest of the province has caught up with my riding. The rest of this province is pretty well on the ropes. There are not many taxpayers out there who would be pleased to see this government walk away from the House in the new year and continue on the current path of spending, especially with the Ontario economy crumbling around us.

I do hear government members cry, "It's not our fault. Much of the developed world is in the same pickle." But we do see our country, Canada, is rolling with the punches; in Ontario, we're taking it right in the teeth. I can attest for Norfolk county and Haldimand county: They have been kicked in the teeth in the last several years. Look at the numbers: Canada lost 71,000 jobs in November; the fact is 66,000 of those jobs used to be in Ontario. Government has put the people who, in the past, grew and sold tobacco out of business. Cash crops, pork, beef, horticultural producers, still see the high cost and the low return. I think of our steel-based, our petroleum-based, manufacturing; of course, I think of auto, auto parts, general manufacturing. All these sectors are now being kicked in the stomach.

In my travels across my riding and across the province, I can attest, people are not afraid of work. If they aren't working, they want to work. If they're not working, they volunteer, they pitch in, they help out. That's really part of our history. It's part of our heritage, certainly in Haldimand county, in Norfolk county, and, I would posit, throughout the rest of small-town and rural Ontario.

When times are tough, we realize that we do have a government for a reason—it should work out that way—and yet this government wants to us sign a blank cheque

for its current spending plans while the government MPPs head home to duck out of the storm. I do question this government's direction, and I'm not too prepared to support this continued walk down the garden path, especially given McGuinty's refusal to deal with some of these real issues.

Again, look at the auto sector. The automotive sector is Canada's largest direct employer: 700,000 workers directly employed. Millions of other jobs are indirectly affected. There are about 40,000 firms directly involved in the manufacturing, distributing, selling and repairing of vehicles. That works out to one in every six jobs in Ontario.

Car dealerships: We're all hearing from car dealerships in our ridings. There are 3,100 car dealers across Canada. They employ 155,000 people, and as far as charity alone, the estimate is that they contribute over \$100 million every year to charity. I mean, can you think of a hockey team or a soccer team that's not sponsored in part by a local car dealership? These dealers have invested millions of dollars in their plant and equipment. In recent years they've increased purchases, and the problem they have is that their customers are not buying. We know about the credit crunch.

There are a number of options out there as far as dealing with auto. Many of them focus on the Detroit Three: talk of forgivable loan guarantees, lower capital taxes, lower environmental taxes, perhaps grants to build the new manufacturing required, bridge financing, money to retrain workers, or perhaps relieving them of pension liabilities. This auto sector needs direction. They wish to know where the plan is as well.

Two things are clear in my mind: Stimulus is needed, and the auto sector does need help. The analysts tell us that the credit crisis means their potential customers can't get a car loan. Further to that—and even Monday morning, travelling in my riding in Norfolk, and previously travelling in Haldimand county—I've received recommendations as far as helping out auto: essentially, assistance by providing the potential customers themselves with a cut to PST and a cut to GST charged on a new car or truck purchase; it may apply to a used vehicle. So that's some of the input I'm getting from people directly in my riding. I really haven't heard anything specific from this particular government, and I do remind the members opposite: Develop a plan for auto. You have to focus. You have to think of that expression coming from south of the border: "It's the economy, stupid." Focus. The clock is ticking. We must be cognizant of the very real job, the economic implications at stake. These are very time-sensitive issues, and it's not the time for this Ontario government to procrastinate.

Now, the Premier has acknowledged "an element of merit" in the argument that the Detroit automakers are the architects of their own misfortune; they should be allowed to succumb to the discipline of the market. I have a problem with this view. We know that, as the heartland of Canada's auto industry, Ontario would obviously be hardest hit if any of the Big Three filed for

bankruptcy. That would be a devastating blow to this province, a province that has already acknowledged a \$500-million deficit. I think it's going to be much more than that. We're looking at a deficit well into the billions.

The Canadian subsidiaries of the Detroit Three—GM, Ford and Chrysler—employ 30,000 workers in Canada. The broader auto sector, the parts business, has significant business in Simcoe, down my way, and Tillsonburg next door. Think of the dealers, as I had mentioned. You put that together and we're looking at 400,000 people employed in this business. Mr. McGuinty has admitted that if one or more of the Big Three automakers collapses, this province has no plan B; he would not know what to do. I quote McGuinty again: He's "not even going to think about that."

Yet here we have a government today that's asking us, through concurrences, to think about allowing it to continue on its current direction while this House sits empty after Christmas, during the largest economic crisis of our generation. I feel that is cause for worry. We should worry, and I have very little confidence in the direction that this government is taking right now.

1640

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I actually was looking forward to making some comments on this interim supply motion, because it allows us, by the rules of the House, to talk generally about the economy and the budget of Ontario.

I want to pick up on something my good friend Mr. Barrett—I forget the name of the riding—raised in his speech. That is that the economy is turning, and it's not turning for the better. We see this worldwide. What I guess is frustrating to Ontarians and Canadians is that it would seem that the federal government and at least this government do not want to be in the Legislature answering questions on behalf of the opposition—or answering questions of the media on a daily basis—in tough economic times. And so this government is going to prorogue this House. There are no guarantees about when its coming back.

I think the point made is Ontario citizens and Canadians want to have their governments and they want to have their members in the legislatures, according to their calendars, according to House calendar, which says we'd normally come back in February. I'm not arguing that we don't deserve to go back to our constituencies during Christmas, but they expect us to come back here early.

I would just think that the government, in this tough economic time, would say, "Listen, we all, as members, need to roll up our sleeves." Nobody—no one single party, no one single member—has an answer to all the questions about what's going on in the economy, and what the responses are. It seems to me that it's incumbent upon the government to have members in this Legislature, and our committees active, so that we're able to have the discussions about what the response should be to the downturn in the Ontario economy. I want to talk about a few of those things today in the time that we have on this interim supply motion.

I say to both the Conservatives in Ottawa under Mr. Harper and the McGuinty government here in Ontario, a pox on both your houses. I think Ontarians and Canadians want to see their legislators at work here in Queen's Park and in Ottawa. They want to see us engaged, not in name-calling—because I agree with those out there who don't like that—but in real dialogue about what we need to do to turn this economy around. You can't do that when Houses are prorogued and members come back based on whenever the Premier of Ontario decides that we're going come back.

In the short time that I have in this interim supply motion, I want to talk about some of the things that I think we need to be doing as a response to what's happening in the economy.

First of all, let's understand. We heard Chrysler say today that they want \$1.5 billion from Canada and Ontario in order to safeguard the plants here in Ontario. That's a lot of money; it works out to about \$200,000 per worker, so it's a pretty big bailout package. Nonetheless, we need to respond to this. The issue is going to be—for us as Ontario and for Canada—to what degree do we help Chrysler and not help Honda, GM, Ford and everybody else who's in the automotive business?

We need to look at this from a sectoral perspective. As we have a forest industry and we need to have a sectoral response to what's happening in forestry, we need to have a sectoral response to what is happening in other parts of the economy, such as auto.

And I think what really galls Ontarians—and I think the media are now starting to turn their guns on government, because they're saying, "Listen, you've allowed this thing to happen. Your responses have been fairly weak up to now. You've basically allowed this to become an issue where now the automakers are coming, and the government's inviting you in to have some back-room discussions about what the response should be, and as a result of that, things are being ratcheted up far more than they need to be."

I think that we have to have a very clear, transparent, public debate about how we're going to spend tax dollars in Ontario, and how we're going to spend tax dollars in Canada, to assist these industries that are having difficulty. We're talking about huge sums of money. We saw the United States put together a \$700-billion-plus program to respond to what's happening in their economy, and we've seen Canada respond in kind. I think it's some \$35 billion that Canada is putting forward. And certainly Ontario is going to have to put something on the table if we're prepared to support our economy and allow things to happen that prevent the closure of these large employers and smaller employers across this province.

It seems to me where we have a real problem is that this government, first of all, I believe, doesn't have a real plan. They've done some tinkering here in this, no question. There have been some key investments that have helped in places like Honda and others. I give the government credit for that, but there is no real sectoral strategy about what's going to be Ontario's response to

the industries that are affected by this downturn. How much can we afford as a province? Because we have a limited amount of resources ourselves. Can we afford, on an annual basis, \$1 billion, \$2 billion, \$5 billion, \$10 billion? Do we go into debt for it? Those are questions that we have to ask, and I think it's incumbent upon us as legislators, and extremely incumbent upon the Premier of Ontario, to have that open and to have a transparent debate where the public is engaged with us about what the response should be.

Then we should be calling the captains of industry before our legislative committees. Let them come to the full scrutiny of the public in order to say, "Here's what we want," and it's none of this back-room stuff. They need to be held accountable.

We saw what happened in the United States. Thank God they had a transparent process there. They got called before Congress and they all showed up in their private jets. They were criticized, rightly, that they shouldn't be wasting the money of the shareholders and the workers of those corporations on private jets when they're going to ask the government for a huge public-dollar bailout.

It's important that this is made transparent so that the captains of industry understand, if you're asking government for money—and we're willing to help you. There's not a member in this House, I would think—I hope the Conservatives don't have a problem; I know ideologically they might, but I think in the end they would do the right thing—or party in this House that doesn't understand that we need to put something on the table to help our industries.

The question becomes, how much? How much could we afford? How are we going to pay for it? Is it debt? Is it reductions of other expenditures within the government? That has to be a very clear and transparent process where, yes, tough questions are asked by members of the opposition to the government. The government needs to respond and defend what they're doing and, I would argue, adjust what they're doing based on what we're trying to tell them by way of questions in the House, and allow this debate to happen publicly in the Legislature so everybody can see what we're talking about—there's nothing behind closed doors—and we have a full committee process that allows the public to be engaged. The captains of industry have to show up at those particular committees to defend publicly what they want us to spend.

My friends, it's not my money and it's not your money on the other side of the House. It's the Ontario taxpayers' money, and we're charged to make sure that we do a good job and make key investments for the people of Ontario that work for us, that we attach some conditions to it, and that we're transparent about how we're going to sell it.

I would say on the premise at the very beginning, I agree we're going to have to put some money on table. What the number is will be determined by the process.

One of the key things we have to say to industry is this: "Whatever money we give you, we as the Ontario

government are going to make sure that there are some conditions tied to that money. It might be a number of things; for example, that the money we give you is not going to be used to develop products that are going to be manufactured in Mexico or China or the United States, that if we're using Ontario taxpayers' dollars, we want an assurance that that money will be invested in Ontario corporations and it will be spent in Ontario. We will source as much of that money for R&D, and do whatever needs to be done within industry in order to retool or whatever, to Ontario companies, so that our public dollars given or lent to these companies are levering back employment in Ontario." That's the very first thing we've got to say to them.

I also want to say this just in passing: We should not be trying to pick the winners. This is something I really feel strongly about. We need to allow those corporations, companies and entrepreneurs who think that they've got a problem and can do something positive for our economy to come before us too and tell us what it is they need, and if there is some way we can deal with it. I would argue that we basically try to do this in a way that's transparent and fair to all, both the taxpayers and those who are asking for the money.

One of the other conditions that we have to give, when giving money to corporations, is we have to make sure that workers are protected. We have to say to them, "You will treat your workers fairly. You will not utilize these economic conditions to try to get concessions in your collective agreements, should you be unionized, or concessions from workers who are not protected by a union." I think that's only fair. If we're going to put public dollars into a corporation, we need to make sure that it's not the workers who are going to pay by way of concession, whether they're unionized or non-unionized. That should be a condition.

We need to make sure that we safeguard workers' pensions, especially in these companies where we're investing. We need to make sure that the money we're putting in also deals with the issue of pension liability. We know that many corporations in Ontario, with this economic meltdown, are exposed to huge unfunded liabilities in their pension plans. We need to make sure that we protect workers' and retired workers' income that they have worked and given their entire lives to get as pension income. We will have to change pension laws in Ontario. Also, in the short term, we will have to say to industry, "You have a responsibility to protect those workers as well."

Those are some of the key things we have to tell industry if they're coming before us.

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The other issue is that we need to look beyond existing industry.

Oh, just before I go there, one last thing: We need to deal with the credit issue that companies are having and to remember that it's not just the large corporations that are having the credit problem. GM, Chrysler and Ford have their debt issues, and they need to go get some cash,

and we understand why. Their operating capital is down, and they owe some money, and they're being squeezed with what's going on, and they're trying to stay afloat. That's real, and we have to deal with that. But let's not forget about the retailers in this. For example, if you're an automotive dealer, here's what's going on in Ontario, as it is going on across North America: You cannot get the type of financing that you used to get before to put the cars on your lot. The way it normally works is if you're buying cars to sell or if you're a Ski-Doo distributor with Ski-Doos to sell, or any kind of retailer, to put the equipment on your floor, you deal with financing companies that pay the producer, such as GM, for the cars that you're buying, and then they finance it for the time it's on your showroom floor or on your lot to be sold. I'm being told by many retailers across this province that financing is tightening up.

It is getting very expensive and almost impossible, in some cases, for retailers such as automotive dealers, snowmobile dealers, television dealers etc., to finance the stock that goes on their floor. The problem is, if the retailer can't buy the goods from the manufacturer because they can't finance it while it's sitting on the floor in their showroom, it means the manufacturer can't produce. So don't just give money to the corporations to deal with their debt issues; we need to make sure that the retailers are going to be able to get fair access to credit so that they're able to purchase the goods to put on their floor to sell to the consumer.

On the other side, we need to deal with the issue of consumer debt. The other thing I'm being told by dealers across Ontario, be it Ski-Doo dealers, TV dealers, car dealers etc., is that they're having a hard time trying to approve people for loans. In fact, I was talking to one of the automotive dealers the other day. He was telling me he had somebody come into his showroom who wanted to buy a Chrysler product. The guy had \$20,000 down in order to buy this particular Jeep Cherokee or whatever vehicle it was he was trying to buy from Chrysler, and it took the dealer five days to get this guy financed. Can you imagine that? You've got \$20,000 cash, you walk in to buy a \$40,000 or \$50,000 vehicle, and the bank where you have good credit is giving you a hard time to approve you on a loan that has a reasonable rate. There was a time when you could do it through GM financing and others for either 0% down or 1.5%, and they would carry the financing. That helped to sell the cars off the lot in big numbers. Now what's happening is that these companies have retreated from offering credit to their customers who are purchasing their products, so the dealers are having to go to the banks and sometimes the finance companies to try to approve somebody's loan. Even for this particular gentleman, with \$20,000 down—it took five days to approve a person with good credit, with \$20,000 down, to buy a \$50,000 vehicle. We have a problem.

My point is, don't just deal with the big corporation. You've got to deal with the retailer. You've got to allow the retailer to get credit to put stock on the floor so they

can sell it. You need to recognize that it might take a little bit longer to sell in this economy; therefore, we might have to carry that credit cost for a little bit longer, and we need to reduce the credit cost to the retailer, because they're certainly squeezed. Then we've got to deal with the consumer who is trying to get the money to buy the product, and we need to deal with the banks and the finance companies in some way, or the automotive industry if it's a car, to make sure there is a component that allows for easier credit.

The other part is that we also need to deal with the issue of consumer debt overall. There is an increasing amount of debt that is carried by all consumers in this province. I would argue that the vast majority of Ontarians are carrying credit charges on their credit cards month over month. I would argue that there would be a fair number of us, even in this Legislature, who carry balances on our credit cards. I know I do. By the time I do my expenses and work my way around to getting everything in, I'm carrying credit month over month—and they're charging unreasonable amounts of interest on credit cards.

So we have to ask ourselves a pretty fundamental question, as Ontario legislators—and the federal House as well, because a lot of this is federal, but I think we have a role to play—what's fair to be charged on the part of these banks that have been making billions of dollars in profit for years and now all of a sudden are tightening up credit because they've lent each other money and they've made some very bad business investments, so now they're crying poor. These banks are charging people, on credit card charges, huge amounts of interest and all kind of various fees for the services of lending money to the consumer. I think we need to deal with the issue of consumer debt by figuring out what's fair to the consumer and what's fair to the financial institution when it comes to return on the investments for the loan that's given to the consumer, and that the consumer is not paying through the nose—high interest rates and fees that, quite frankly, are unspeakable.

There was a very interesting program on CBC Radio a few months back. They were talking about debit cards. The banks will not disclose to the Canadian government how much revenue they make from service charges on debit cards. Can you imagine? You have a business where they don't have to report how much money they're making on that? They just show it as a consolidated amount of money as far as services, and the Canadian government doesn't know how much money they're making overall for all the various charges off of credit cards and the various charges on bank cards. I think that's ludicrous.

I don't have a problem with the bank making money. God, I want more millionaires in Ontario that we can produce. I want them to make tons and tons of money. I believe in entrepreneurship. I'm a social democrat but I understand the economy is an issue where, if the economy is not firing on all four cylinders, people aren't working, and we're not collecting taxes.

My point is, there comes a social responsibility for the person who makes the money. In the case of banks, I think they've got to disclose to the government what it is they're making as far as service charges, and we have to determine, by way of a transparent public process, is that fair? And act accordingly, according to laws and regulations. I would further say that we need to deal with the issues, as far as bailouts, having to deal with how we're able to assist the consumers to deal with the debt that they're carrying.

I think we need to be very careful here, and that's why I advocate that this should all be done very transparently, and it's got to be done in public. We cannot continue what's happened up to now, where discussions are going on with the Minister of International Trade, the minister of industry, trade and commerce, the Premier and the finance minister—all kinds of private meetings with these corporations coming cap in hand. We need to put that out in the open because the Ontario taxpayer needs to know what's being asked, and they want to know what can be afforded and what should be a proper response to the economic slowdown that we have here in Ontario. I would advocate that we need to do that in a fairly open way.

I just want to end on this point, because I think it's important. I was listening to the CBC this morning, and a comment was made by one of the people asking questions of a federal New Democrat. They were saying, "You guys, you don't believe in entrepreneurship." I just want to say, "Give me a break." I'm a social democrat, and I understand more than anybody else how important the economy is to people.

If people aren't working, they're not contributing to society. It's a huge problem when it comes to our self-esteem as working-class people. We want to make sure that companies make lots of money, because I understand that if they make lots of money, I can go and bargain a better collective agreement. That's the way it works. If my employer is making tons of money, it's a lot easier to get to the bargaining table, if I'm unionized, to get more money. And if I'm not unionized, it's a lot easier for an individual employee to ask for more money from the boss because the boss can't say, "I'm not making no money."

I understand, as a social democrat, that we need to have a strong economy and we have to have people making money. I also believe, as a social democrat, that we should be a lot clearer, I think, in our party. This is part of the reason I'm running for leadership of the Ontario New Democrat Party: I believe that we need to say to Ontarians, "We get it."

Social democracy is not just about a couple of issues around health care, public service and equity and labour issues. Social democracy is about everything. It's about, how do we, as social democrats, respond to the issue of the economy? I believe we should, quite frankly, be very avant-garde as social democrats when it comes to finding ways to allow entrepreneurs to make money, and we should be doing all we can to make this economy flourish.

We need to recognize that Ontario cannot compete as a low-wage economy such as China or India. We're a high-wage economy. If that's the case, then we need do other things to assist our entrepreneurs. First of all, as a social democrat, I say we should be investing in research and development along with industry, labour, communities and whoever else wants to be involved in industry, in order to look at, what are the products of tomorrow? What are people going to want to buy five years from now or 10 years from now, so that we're doing the research and development here in Ontario that situates the Ontario economy to be the people who produce these goods that people are going to want in the future?

RIM is a great example of that here in Ontario. RIM has developed a technology that is now worldwide. It's called the BlackBerry. An Ontario company did that, doing some research and development in our own backyard. Imagine what could happen. How many more successes such as RIM could we have if we were really serious around research and development?

1700

I say, as a social democrat, we should be looking at ways to encourage research and development. We should be looking at forwarding tax credits. For example, allow a company that has corporate tax to pay to defer for a period of time until the product comes to market and then pay it back at that time when they are making money on their new product. It allows them some cash flow upfront to deal with some R&D money.

I was talking to one particular organization, I think it was in Waterloo, and they were saying that last year they had to pay \$200,000 worth of corporate tax. The suggestion was made, and I thought it was a good one, that they should be allowed to defer the payment of that tax until the research and development pays off on a product that's being sold, and then they can pay it back to the Ontario government as they're making money with the new product. This allows them at least to raise \$200,000 and gives them some cash flow to do what they've got to do.

I also believe that we, as a government, should be looking at ways to assist with our own money in institutions such as colleges, universities, trade unions, economic development corporations, municipalities, etc., to find ways to fund research and development in Ontario so that the entrepreneurs decide themselves how we can help them fund some of this.

I'm going to say this: We should not try to pick the winners. I think it is wrong if we, as legislators, say, "We're going to do it in this sector or that sector." Listen, that doesn't work. I'll tell you a couple of stories why I think it doesn't work.

When Edison invented the phonograph, everybody thought it was a stupid idea.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Really?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, yeah. Go back and read the story of Edison. It's a fascinating story. He invents the phonograph and people thought it was just a toy. It's one of the largest industries now as a result of that invention,

the playback of music on various devices. If government was the one to pick the winners, they would never have picked Thomas Edison.

That's why I'm saying that, as a government we can't be picking the winners. We have to go to the financial institutions and say, "We, as the province, will backstop the loan to any business application that is made to your bank that you think you can sit with, that you think makes some sense." If the entrepreneur comes in and says, "I want \$2 million," and you're able to raise, as the entrepreneur, let's say \$500,000 of your own money and you need \$1.5 million from the bank and the bank says, "Well, I'm not quite comfortable. I think we're putting ourselves on the edge for a little bit too much," then we, as a province, should back that loan. I don't think it should be a question of us picking the winner. I think we need to say to financial institutions, "If you're prepared to put up some of your money as risk on this project, we'll help backstop some of that risk."

Here's what I would do—and I'm just making these numbers up. It's not a hard-and-fast number, but the idea would be that maybe we secure the loan to a degree of 20%, but then we say, "If you want to bring your industry to a place that's more economically depressed in Ontario, we will up that percentage." So the entrepreneur says, "Okay, I can get 20% if I'm in downtown Toronto or Kitchener or whatever"—well, Kitchener now would probably be more economically depressed—"or I can get 40% if I go to Kingston. Maybe I can get 50% if I go to Timmins." You see where I'm going. It allows development to happen in different regions of the province.

I think we need to look, as a Legislature, at how we can finance some of this money that they need to leverage in order to make investments in their company to produce the products of tomorrow.

The last part of it is, we need to be very serious about training. We need to, as a province, really change our training system. Yes, colleges and universities are a big part of training and they have a role to play, but I know from being in industry—I was an industrial electrician in the mining sector—that not everything I learned at school is applicable to what I'm doing in my workplace. There's specific training that has to happen in the workplace to understand the equipment being used and the technology being used that may not be taught at the community college or university level.

We need continuing education within the workplace, funded by the province and the federal government. Why? I believe, as a social democrat, it should not be entirely the responsibility of industry to pay for training, and I'll tell you why. You have a company down the street that makes widgets. Let's say you spend \$1 million a year to train employees. The economy starts to go well. Where do your employees go if they can get more money down the street? So now you've trained a bunch of workers out of your pocket and they then go to your competitor, and the competitor who didn't want to pay for training says, "Come on in. It's free. Oh, man, I love this."

I'm saying that we, as a province, need to recognize that training is one of those things that could be looked at as a backbone of what makes good economic policy, and I think it's part of the infrastructure. So we, as a province, have to be much more engaged in the cost of training and also assist in providing the training within those workplaces that's needed to do what has to be done.

I also believe we need to really deal with the small business issue. There are a lot of things we can do in this province that allow us to deal with the small business issues that would really take up some of the burden of some of the things that business has to do.

I proposed, for example, in my leadership campaign something very simple, that we do tax remittances—PST/GST—real-time on computers. If I can take my bank card and I can go to any store in any place in Ontario, gas station or retailer, and I can pay with a bank card and it automatically is taken out of my account and put in the merchant's account, certainly we can install software on cash registers that allow, when the retailer is either collecting cash or by way of credit card or debit card, any transaction, the PST/GST to be automatically calculated off the register and automatically remitted, real time, to the government of Ontario account. At the end of the day, there's a report and the software allows the merchant to see and make sure that things have gone right.

We wouldn't have to spend any money on collection—saves us, as a province, tons of money. It would take the burden off the retailer to do all the reporting that they have to do for GST/PST, collect, put the money in bank, cut a cheque, then PST/GST come back and say, "Oh, you didn't do it right, because we changed the rules last week and we forgot to tell you." How many times has that happened to you? We get those complaints as well, right? So it allows it to be put in the software so that the retailer doesn't have to fuss about the collection of PST/GST and doesn't have to fuss with the reporting of collection and how you deal with that. It would cost us some money as a province, but I think it would be a great investment in order to help small business.

The other issue is that we need to take a look at the question of auditing. I've been running around this province over this leadership race, talking to all kinds of people, either in business or individuals. I was talking to a guy the other day who is in the retail business, and he said, "Last year I had three different provincial ministries come in and audit me. I had the people come in for the health tax, I had the auditors for the WSIB, and the other one was for GST/PST."

"So three times last year, I had provincial auditors in my business, going through my books, disrupting my bookkeeper, holding up time—that I had very little of—in order to deal with these audits. Why in heck don't you send one auditor? I don't care if you want to audit me. Pick me at random and have somebody who's trained to look at all my books and to say, 'Oh, there's a problem with the PST or the GST or the HST, the provincial sales

tax or the payroll tax or whatever,' and look at the books in their entirety. At least that way I would only get one auditor." And, God, we would save money.

Can you imagine that, as a province? We can actually train our people to do this. It doesn't mean the loss of jobs in the civil service; it just means we train people to do things better. So I think there are a lot of things that we need to do in these tough economic times that would help us put Ontario back on the map when it comes to being the economy that we were. It's sad, but it's true.

Places like Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have done far more to assist with their economies, both by the natural resources they have—yes, oil and gas—but also, if you look at Saskatchewan and Manitoba, they've done some really excellent stuff to try to find ways to key investment in their province to the point that Saskatchewan is now coming to Ontario and asking Ontario workers who are unemployed to go and work in their province, because they've been so successful. The problem for us is we've sat back and had it too good in Ontario for too long. I don't know if my colleague wants any time on this? No. Okay.

I say this openly. This province, for far too long, has had it very good and an economy that worked to our advantage. We had the United States, the largest trading partner to the south. We had a low Canadian dollar. We had electricity at cost, through a public utility called Ontario Hydro, that was a huge economic development tool for Ontario; it allowed the construction of many industries around this province that located here because of that public policy. We have the natural resources such as fibre out of trees, minerals underground, the farming industry and others that allowed to us really position ourselves as a very strong economy. The problem is globalization is happening, and industries are saying, "We might still need to mine the ore out of Timmons and cut the trees, but we can do the manufacturing somewhere in the Third World."

We're losing the jobs by the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands, on a yearly and monthly basis, and I think the problem is that Ontario has not responded to the changes and globalization adequately. We have not tried to position our economy to be that economy of tomorrow. We have not tried in any way, shape or form to say, "What can we do here in Ontario that allows us"—not to stop globalization, because I understand as a social democrat it's hard to stop, but clearly we can do things in order to negate the negative effects of globalization. We need to do things in Ontario that are to our advantage when it comes to the policies of this province. I'll just give you a few—

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Mr. Peter Kormos: We should be exporting prosperity, not importing despair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's a very good point. We should be exporting prosperity, not importing despair. I think you're 100% right.

There are things that we can do in Ontario that would put Ontario in a much better position to deal with what's

happening in the economy. I say to the provincial government, you have not responded, Mr. McGuinty, with all due respect, to any of the things that really need to be done in this economy.

To prorogue the House—my God, you're not any better than Stephen Harper. Let's just say it right out. Liberals, Tories—kind of the same old story, right? They're going to prorogue the House in the middle of an economic crisis. I understand that people have to get home for Christmas. I've got a family, too.

Mr. Peter Kormos: What about that Rae fellow?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That Rae fellow is crying nowadays. But he's not talking to me anymore. That's okay; I don't mind. I don't miss him. He never talked to me when he was here. That's a whole other story.

I would just say, to prorogue the House in the middle of an economic crisis is a sign that this government does not want to have public scrutiny, and that's a huge problem.

I say again, the process has got to be transparent. If the captains of industry are coming to Ontario and saying, "Open up your chequebook," I want a public debate. I want us to ask questions of the government. I want the media to scrutinize the government. I want the captains of industry to stand before legislative committees and defend to the public, let alone us, through the public process of committees, why they want \$1.5 billion. There may be very good reasons why GM wants that, but I have a hard time trying to square off an investment of \$200,000 per employee without us having a really frank discussion about what conditions we're going to set on those investments.

If we're going to give that money, we need to have some assurances that they are going to spend that money in Ontario, that they're going to buy their products from other Ontario manufacturers, that they're going to source the services to other Ontario firms, that they're not going to send the products that they're building here to a production plant outside of the country after we've given them money, such as this government did with the GM people in Oshawa—what a tragedy. We need to ensure that we protect workers, so that if employers are getting some money, they are not going to the employees and asking for concessions—either collective bargaining or for workers who are not protected by a union. We need to protect the pension plans of workers. If we're going to be lending money to these guys, we need to make sure that we properly protect workers and their pensions. Also, most important is to protect the communities that these employers are in.

We need to do all that we can to, yes, help industry and to, yes, help turn the economy, but we need to set some conditions so that in the end the public is protected.

I say to this government, you're no better than Stephen Harper when you prorogue the House in the middle of an economic crisis.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Timmins–James Bay. While those of

us on the governing side don't have any personal stake in the race in which he's engaged for the leadership of his party, there can be no doubt that the member for Timmins–James Bay brings a very informed, very passionate, very consistent and coherent set of arguments to this floor, and I think we all benefit from his participation as our colleague in this Legislature. While I don't agree with many of the things that he said, I certainly have to commend him on a very interesting address this afternoon on this concurrence motion.

I'd like to talk a little bit on this concurrence motion and about what some of this means to those of us who live in the fast-growing 905 belt, particularly in my home city of Mississauga. I'd like to talk about what the continuing efforts of the motion before us—what difference that has made and continues to make in the city of Mississauga.

In the city of Mississauga, we are a little bit close to halfway toward a measure that the government set forth in our budget in 2007. This is very important to those of us in the 905 belt: It was the elimination of GTA pooling, which was a process whereby some \$40 million a year came from the taxpayers of Mississauga and Brampton and was sent to the city of Toronto without any accountability at all by us. It was the wrong thing to do. It was a measure that preceded our government and it was one that we said we could address over a period of six years. We will soon, next fiscal year, go into the third of those six fiscal years and be on the path toward eliminating it.

Just about three weeks ago, our Mississauga colleagues had an opportunity to get together, as we occasionally do, with the mayor and the council, and in this case, with our two newly elected members of Parliament in Mississauga. The lot of us got together and we had a chance to chat—something that we have worked very hard on, which is to improve our dialogue with our city. Mayor McCallion closed the door and we all had a chance to say what was on our minds, what were the things that we needed and in what ways could we work together, because one of the comments I made is that no one of us is the government. When people come to us and say, "I need the government to do something," we are all the government and we all have to work at it together.

After that, what we were able to do is to make a ceremonial cheque presentation of some \$24.95 million in infrastructure money to the city of Mississauga, money that is going to make a real difference in some of the projects that the city makes. Now, at this point, it's up to the city to decide how to spend it, but our philosophy as a government toward our city is, "You are a mature level of government. We trust you. We believe in you. We're going to work together with you."

As the mayor once said, the difference here is that if the feds—and I don't mean this as a shot to my colleagues across the floor because it was as true under the former government as it is under this government—say they're going to send you some money, they send you an IOU; if the province says they're going to send you some

money, they flow it into your bank account electronically.

After that \$24.95 million, I'd like to also mention that some things that were inappropriate for the property tax base were removed—for example, Ontario drug benefits, ODSP, land ambulance. The municipal property tax base isn't the right place for those, and now they're gone. For a municipality that means that our taxes, which are higher than they are in Toronto, despite being a very well managed city that's entirely debt-free—we can ease some of the pressure on the taxpayer of the city of Mississauga.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the financial progress that Ontario has made just in the last several weeks. Just last week, the Bank of Montreal announced a new office facility in northwest Mississauga, in Meadowvale, one of the communities that I represent—it'll be built on Argentia Road—a state-of-the-art, \$75-million customer contact centre. It's going to create 1,200 jobs. It's financed by Sun Life Financial—First Gulf Corp. is one of the partners—and it will be the largest new office building in Mississauga, completely state-of-the-art in energy efficiency. It'll be complete in about two years.

Another project, again a private sector project, that's been happening in a climate that we have all in this House been working to foster and maintain is Cyclone Manufacturing, a state-of-the-art firm in Meadowvale—Meadowvale's been on a roll—that does computer-aided design and manufacturing of precision aircraft parts for all the largest aircraft manufacturers in the world. They can use a single block of aluminium, they can produce an engine part or a piece for an airframe, without a single weld or rivet—really high-tech stuff. They just expanded into a brand new building in Meadowvale. So in addition to their existing state-of-the-art place, they're building a new one. This is important in our community.

Credit Valley Hospital, phase 2, began a year early, a year ahead of schedule, in June 2008. It'll be finished some time in 2010 or 2011. It's on time, it's on budget. This is going to be a major redevelopment: some 275,000 square feet of new space and a redevelopment of existing space. This means for us a major expansion of the maternity suite; it's going to ease some of the pressure on our operating rooms. I was just in the operating rooms with some of our surgeons during constituency week in November. I went in and changed where the surgeons change. Let me say this: If your children went in to play hockey and had to change in a space that cramped, as parents, you'd be up in arms. The hospital just recently found a way to put a washroom in there so that the surgeons don't have to go down the hall to wash their hands. We definitely need some of the expansion room that the ambulatory surgery centre is going to give us.

In GO Transit, there's a major renovation program under way at Streetsville with the new access tunnel for those of us who are taking—and I'm one of those many days—the last three trains in the morning. You're not going to face that nearly two-block walk from the back of the lot up to the station, through the tunnel, onto the platform, and then to where you want to get on the train.

We've finished resurfacing the walkway leading to the station. There will be a reconfiguration of the kiss-and-ride, which is just now in progress, and some other general fix-ups on the station. That project will be complete this winter, a major infrastructure project right in Streetsville.

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At Meadowvale, the platform's been extended to handle the new 12-car trains, along with improved disabled access, and of course improvements to the platform. At Lisgar, the station that I petitioned this House to have built in 2003-04 and which was completed ahead of schedule and well within budget in mid-2007, that station will soon have a new 50-kilowatt wind generator on it. That will enable it to generate, when the wind is blowing, all of the power that the station consumes.

There have been, on the government's watch, six new schools built in the neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Streetsville, Churchill Meadows and central Erin Mills in the last five years, and these are major, major things that our communities need. We have major capital projects that are already complete to some of our elementary and our high schools.

Just one final point: The member for Timmins—James Bay proposed measures to defer corporate tax until later. I'd just like to point out that the government's budget in 2008 already implemented a measure that allows a 10-year tax-free period if you commercialize innovation products from anywhere in Canada right here in Ontario.

Speaker, I believe that there are still a few other members who would like to say a few things on this concurrence motion, so I thank you very much for the time.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on the concurrences motion before the Assembly. There are a number of topics that I wanted to address related to the concurrences motion which would assign certain funds to certain ministries. Originally, as you know, we were going to be addressing Bill 126 today, and in the time ahead with the Ministry of Transportation, as it considers what happens going forward on that bill, I thought it important to read in some of the Facebook postings. Believe it or not, Facebook postings; even though it's been banned by the McGuinty government and in the civil service, many members are on Facebook. Here's some that I have received, as well as some e-mails commenting on the proposed Bill 126, that I wanted to ensure were on the record for the benefit of the Minister of Transportation.

Here's one from Glen Futers on the St. Catharines/Niagara network. Mr. Futers said, "As a parent of a 17-year-old young driver and a police officer, I find this proposed new legislation utterly ridiculous. We try to encourage our young to mature and get jobs, socialize with each other, and we are once again going to place limitations on them without any justifiable proof that such legislation would even be effective. I feel for the

father who initiated this journey, but it doesn't matter if the driver has three passengers or one. If a collision occurs and it is serious enough, death will occur." Mr. Futers also goes in his posting to say, "The next issue is the speeding. This again is too restrictive"—but he's run out of room for his post.

I also received one from Doug Musk, also in the St. Catharines/Niagara network. Mr. Musk said, "The speeding changes don't take into account the amount of kilometres over the speed limit. Individuals commuting to school or work could theoretically lose their licence for 30 days by going 10 kilometres over.... I am very worried about what social engineering this government will engage in next."

Andrew Dowie from the University of Ottawa posted, "The McGuinty bill pre-judges youth as being automatic offenders. It treats youth more harshly, penalty-wise, than the rest of us for undertaking exactly the same behaviour.

"I don't know what kind of childhood the Premier had, but an integral part of mine was congregating with friends around a bonfire out in the country somewhere, going to the movies, visiting friends, and camping on weekends. Since few (if any) 16-year-olds can afford a car of their own at that age, carpooling/ride-sharing is a must!"

There are many others that we received. I think in the interests of time I will highlight those that took the time to post on Facebook. Here are some e-mails that we received to our website about the same legislation.

Ben Van Weelden of Smithville, Ontario wrote a long e-mail. I'll read parts of it. It says, "Hello, Tim,

"It's been a while since we've talked—I remember you coming into my grade 8 class about five or six years ago." It shows that you've been in the Legislature for quite some time when elementary school students whose class you visited are now driving or in the workforce.

Ben Van Weelden goes on to say the following:

"I'm 19 years old, in my second year at Niagara College, and I've paid my own way. I have received no OSAP, I pay my own insurance, I pay for my own gas, I pay for my books, and I pay for all of my tuition.

"My driving record is still 100% clean, and for me to be penalized because someone else's kid made an error in judgment isn't entirely fair."

He also says, "I can also ... give you the perspective of a teenager. I can guarantee you that if I had been forced to wait longer between G1 and G2, it would 100% have not affected the way I drive."

That's Mr. Van Weelden, expressing his opposition to that legislation.

Tony Kamphuis, from Smithville, Ontario—another very thoughtful letter that he sent to Premier McGuinty and the transportation minister, and he was kind enough to copy me on it. I'll highlight some of his points.

"Dear Mr. McGuinty,

"...The restriction on the number of teenaged passengers who can travel with a driver under 21 years of

age is too intrusive an intervention into an area in which you simply need to allow for personal responsibility.

"First, it discriminates on the basis of age. I have a responsible teenaged son who would see his opportunities significantly restricted through absolutely no fault of his own, but purely because of the group of which he is involuntarily a part. That is just not right. We wouldn't allow this on the basis of colour, creed or orientation and we certainly shouldn't allow it in this case."

Mr. Kamphuis's second point deals with the fact that public transportation is simply not available, whether it's small-town rural Ontario like Smithville and West Lincoln in my riding, or other communities.

His third point concerns the environment and how this will cause a disincentive to carpool.

His fourth point says that "since your government does not allow our teenagers to travel on publicly funded school buses because they attend a faith-based school, our children and many other families need to have their children carpool to get to school. Again, if we are encouraging them to join school teams or the school play, before- or after-school practices are just a way of life. There is no public transportation option available and this restriction will literally at least double the number of trips we would need to make between our home and school—not to mention our church, area hockey arenas and soccer fields etc.

"I can see that on the surface of it, this part of the proposed regulation may have seemed like a good idea, but I would strongly urge you to listen to the voices of your citizens and let this idea fade away. There is no dishonour in listening to citizens as part of the democratic process!"

Again, from Tony Kamphuis.

Susan Scott e-mailed me—again, a very thoughtful e-mail. Here are some highlights.

With respect to the changes in the G2, "I am opposed to this change for a variety of reasons. I do not believe that responsibility is something that someone wakes up with upon their 21st birthday; responsibility is learned. I am of the opinion that if restrictions are placed on 'new drivers' then they should be across the board, no matter what the age of the 'new driver.'"

She goes on to say in her e-mail, "This legislation does not promote the practice of being a designated driver.

"This change in legislation is also contrary to the values of the charter, as it does not impose the same restrictions on drivers of comparable or less experience but longer in the tooth."

To conclude, Ms. Scott says, "I believe that driving skill is not based on age but on responsibility."

Jeroen Elsinga—again, a thoughtful e-mail, a number of paragraphs long. Here are some highlights. "As for the licence suspension, for reasons such as speeding," he has some concerns about that, and concerns about the impact on carpooling, because if you're trying to get to church, to sports activities, to social activities, the proposal that the transportation minister brought forward would discourage that significantly.

The last of the e-mail highlights are from Jill, a mom: “We are sending our children off to college and university younger, and now you’re telling my 18-year-old son that he can’t carpool with two of his friends because he is 18. How is this fair?”

She also talks about the impact on the environment and concludes by saying, “Sounds like this wasn’t thought out completely. The good kids are being penalized for those irresponsible ones.”

I wanted to make sure those got into the record as the Legislature continues with this bill. I’ll be registering my opposition in voting against the legislation that Premier McGuinty has brought forward—mind you, at a time when hundreds of thousands of jobs have left the province of Ontario and when Ontario is dead last in economic growth and job creation in Confederation and, sadly, has become a have-not province.

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As we also consider the concurrences, I again want to bring to the attention of the Minister of Health, in the allocations to the Ministry of Health, the importance of helping Andrew Lanese. Andrew is a brave 11-year-old boy who lives in Pelham in the community of Niagara. My colleague, Mr. Kormos from Welland, has addressed this issue, and I have also supported public funding to help Andrew, who suffers from Hunter syndrome. If not treated, Andrew faces further damage to his tissue and organ functions and even premature death. The medication available—Elaprase—is actually covered in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, but because Andrew lives in Ontario, sadly, it is not covered. Through very generous community support and fundraising, they’ve provided the first set of treatments for Andrew Lanese out of their own pocket—private funds. We have seen absolutely remarkable and encouraging progress. Andrew’s motor skills have noticeably improved. He can now actually walk greater distances on his own, which he was not capable of doing before he had this medical treatment.

It would be an absolute shame, it would be a crime, to see Andrew then regress after this progress has been made. Again, I do call upon the Minister of Health to fund Elaprase for Andrew Lanese. As you may know, the ministry is taking it on an individual-by-individual, case-by-case basis. I understand there are two others who have actually been funded to help combat Hunter syndrome. I understand there are only about six individuals in the province who suffer from this rare and very harmful degenerative disease. I don’t understand how the Ministry of Health can draw the line between two individuals and not the rest, particularly when you’ve seen the kind of progress Andrew has made to date with Elaprase. I do hope the minister in the time ahead, with the funding he has been allocated, will send some funding Andrew’s way.

The last point I want to make is with respect to the Eramosa karst and the feeder lands in Stoney Creek. My colleague Paul Miller, who represents the more northern reaches of Stoney Creek—I have the southern portion

above the escarpment—has worked on this issue and I’ve worked on this issue; we’ve worked well together. As you may know, the 185-acre Eramosa Karst Conservation area was set aside, protected from development. It is a unique environmental feature. That work was begun and advanced under the previous PC government. The Liberal government then furthered that work. The next step is to preserve the feeder lands that bring the water into the Eramosa karst.

I expect that the Ontario Realty Corp. will be making a decision soon about the future of that land. I think it’s absolutely important to preserving green space and unique environmental features that the feeder lands be set aside as well. I look forward to working with my colleague Mr. Miller on that, and hopefully the other Hamilton members, in seeing that preserved.

Lastly, we had presented a very thoughtful report entitled *Where Do We Grow From Here?* on the future of the tender fruit industry. I do ask the Minister of Agriculture, with the funding she has been allocated in the time ahead, to move forward on these recommendations in that report. That’s based on the best advice of the farmers, the small businesses and municipal leaders in our area. She does have a copy of the report; we have not heard back yet. I hope she does advance these important causes to support the unique tender fruit lands and the grape-growing area in the Niagara Peninsula.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention to these comments.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It’s my pleasure to rise today to add to the debate on concurrences.

I’m a firm believer in fate. Is it fate that we are debating concurrences the day after the Auditor General uncovered a treasure trove of inefficiencies, wasted spending and virtually no ministerial oversight? The Auditor General’s report confirms what every member of our PC caucus has been saying for months, that the McGuinty government has recklessly spent the hard-earned tax dollars of the citizens of Ontario in good economic times. He has done so without a clear plan, without ministerial oversight and, in particular, with reckless disregard for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Through the auditor’s report we not only know that the Minister of Education has been not in keeping with the facts in commenting to the parents of our special-needs students, but has stood there in this House on June 18, earlier this year, and said, “We know that when those systems are not working, when the accountability is not in place, when there are breaches of protocols and guidelines, then there needs to be action taken by the government. That’s what we’ve done. The public accountability measures are in place and are increasing.”

The minister assured us a mere six months ago that her government took action and that the appropriate accountability measures were in place. Just in case the minister has forgotten, let me remind the House what the Auditor General found plain as day in the Ministry of Education.

The Auditor General found that since 2001-02, special-education grants have increased by 54%—a significant increase, I think. However, the number of students who actually receive special-education services grew a mere 5%. I'm sure that every member of this Legislature has a file in their office of families who need special-education supports and are on a waiting list or perhaps have been cut off support. It is extremely disappointing to learn that this minister has turned a 54% increase in funding into serving a mere 5% more students. I think the minister needs to get back to basics and figure out how such a significant increase can help only 5% more children. This is simply unacceptable to the citizens of Ontario.

To help the minister identify where her oversight issues originate, the Auditor General identified that the information school boards collect about students with special needs does not sufficiently support effective planning and service delivery, program oversight or the identification of effective practices. Schools were unable to measure the gap between the performance of students with special-education needs and the regular curriculum expectations and the reason that the gap even existed. How can you help a special-needs student if you don't have any criteria upon which to determine the effectiveness of your own programming?

What's happening here is that the minister is telling the parents of special-needs students that she has done her due diligence by increasing the funding. What the Minister of Education fails to understand is that simply throwing money at the issue does not ease the burden of families coping with a special-needs child who know in their hearts that their child is suffering and are watching their child struggle every day. Minister, it is insulting to parents when time after time you tell us how much money you are spending. However, you fail to consult with parents to help make the programs more applicable.

The Auditor General clearly stated that school boards did not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with the requirement in regulation 181/98 of the Education Act to consult with parents in connection with IPRCs and in the preparation of individual education plans. Not only is the minister unable to explain what happened to the 54% increase, but we know that mandated programs are not being carried out. Are they short of funding or is it just lack of oversight? Either way, it's totally irresponsible.

I encourage the parents with special-needs students to share their situations with me and others in the House so that together we can hold this government to account for the way in which the McGuinty government has ignored their children. Most importantly, we can highlight where the Minister of Education needs to focus her attention because clearly her eye has been taken off the ball.

In a classic McGuinty government move, where the left hand doesn't seem to know what the right hand is doing, the ministry does not require that school boards establish procedures to assess the quality of special-education services and supports, whether or not the schools complied with the ministry's legislation, regu-

lations and policies. So here we go again. The minister feels that she has resolved the issues in special education by throwing money at them. My expectation of the minister and her ministry in general is—they are not any more than a glorified pocketbook. I expect, and the parents of special-needs kids expect certainly, that if you allocate money to a program you're going to create some expectations, and they are: Create benchmarks, that you're going to ensure that every school board in the province of Ontario is in compliance with your legislation, and you are definitely going to make certain that the money you have allocated to the school boards for special needs is actually spent on special needs. Suffice to say that the Minister of Education is letting these kids down.

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Unfortunately, special needs is not the only area where the minister has not done the job. At a time when accommodation reviews are taking place in virtually every school board in Ontario, the school maintenance and renewal budgets are also being poached. If the people of Ontario are facing a \$500-million deficit, it's no wonder there's absolutely no accountability in this government.

Just listen to the laundry list. Here's the list: One board did not follow its own policies and purchased approximately \$3.5 million in plumbing services from a single-source supplier. Secondly, contrary to policies, these services were not acquired competitively, and many invoices were deliberately split to keep individual payments below \$5,000 and thus avoid having to give written quotes from suppliers. Boards did not always spend funds they received under Good Places to Learn. That's an initiative that the ministry has put forward, with ministry requirements on the highest-priority needs.

At one board in particular, \$2.5 million of Good Places to Learn funding was used on ineligible projects. This board claimed to have spent \$810,000 of its GPL funding on a project that had actually been finished in 2003, before the GPL funding was even announced. Boards are not always using the annual capital renewal funds for identified urgent capital needs.

The Auditor General identified overbilling totalling \$41,500. None of the boards audited had established measurable service expectations for their maintenance and custodial services. Consequently, they can't formally assess whether the funds have been cost-effectively spent and expectations have been met.

It's unacceptable in this day and age, and at a time when our youth are not only engaged in environmental stewardship but taught it at schools, that our boards are not leading by example. For instance, not one of the boards audited had established energy consumption targets to reduce electricity, to reduce gas and water consumption by a target amount. This laundry list demonstrates an abject failure by the ministry to rein in the spending. I'm disappointed as a taxpayer, as a critic for this portfolio and as an MPP who knows this government can do better.

The minister should know that this is a wake-up call, and I expect that she will share with the members in this

Legislature a plan for implementing fiscal accountability throughout the ministry to the end of this term. I also expect that she will correct the issues raised in the special-needs funding for the sake of students and their families who are counting on this minister to do this right.

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

We'll now vote on the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Research and Innovation, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Labour, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

On the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motions agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice in regard to the business of the House for the remainder of this week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed. Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We move that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, there be a timetable applied to the consideration of certain business of the House as follows:

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Morning sitting

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts.

At 10:15 a.m. the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment.

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Following the proceeding "statements by ministries" and prior to the proceeding "petitions" as per the schedule in standing order 8a

That each party be authorized to speak for up to seven minutes on International Human Rights Day.

Afternoon sitting

Debate on the following motions:

A. That the following committees be authorized to meet during the adjournment and/or, in the event of the prorogation of the first session of the 39th Parliament and notwithstanding such prorogation, during the interval between the first and second sessions of the 39th Parliament, and/or upon resumption of the first or second sessions of the 39th Parliament, as follows:

Standing Committee on Government Agencies: February 9 through 11, 2009, inclusive and the afternoon from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on the first Monday following the resumption of the House in 2009; and

Standing Committee on Public Accounts: four days, commencing no earlier than February 17, 2009, such days to be determined by unanimous decision of the subcommittee on committee business; and

Standing Committee on General Government, which is authorized to consider Bills 118 and 126 concurrently during the week of February 9, 2009, for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bills in locations in Ontario at the discretion of the committee; and

B. Notwithstanding such prorogation, the following business remaining on the orders and notices paper be continued and placed on the orders and notices paper of the second sessional day of the second session of the 39th Parliament at the same stage of business for the House and its committees as at prorogation:

(i) all government bills, except Bill 1, An Act to Perpetuate an Ancient Parliamentary Right, and Bill 24, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Community Small Business Investment Funds Act, Corporations Tax Act, Education Act, Income Tax Act, Land Transfer Act and Taxation Act, 2007; and

(ii) the following private members' public bills:

Bill 18, An Act respecting the disclosure of information about marijuana grow operations;

Bill 87, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario;

Bill 91, An Act to amend the Public Vehicles Act respecting bicycle racks on public vehicles;

Bill 101, An Act respecting energy rating for specified residential buildings;

Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods;

Bill 109, An Act to provide a tax credit for the purchase of equipment or devices for persons with disabilities;

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to retailers of electricity and gas marketers;

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act; and

(iii) all private bills; and

(iv) the ballot list for private members' public business;

and that a new ballot for private members' public business be conducted prior to the commencement of the new session and appended to the existing ballot list; pursuant to standing order 98(c) any member may exchange places in the order of precedence with any other member on either ballot list; and

That the debate on motion A be limited to five minutes per party after which, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments thereto, without further debate or amendment; and

That following debate and the vote on motion A, the time remaining until 5:50 p.m. for motion B shall be split equally amongst the three recognized parties, following which the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and amendments thereto, without further debate or amendment.

Thursday, December 11, 2008

The House will not meet until 10:30 a.m.

Thursday, December 11, 2008

Afternoon sitting

Consideration of private members' public business—ballot item numbers 64, 65 and 66.

At the conclusion of private members' public business, the Speaker shall adjourn the House to the next sessional day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Would the members like me to read this motion again?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Smith has moved a motion related to the programming of the House for the next two days. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Smith has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.
The House adjourned at 1752.

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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

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

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
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Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
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Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
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Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

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

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

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

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
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