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Tuesday 23 March 2010

Mardi 23 mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I didn't have time to order water. Can I wave one down? I have a bit of a cold, and we had a big rally in Sudbury yesterday. That didn't help my voice at all.

It is my pleasure to share a few comments on the speech from the throne, the Open Ontario plan. The speech from the throne, within a few minutes of starting, said:

"We carved our province out of a harsh northern land.

"Our people endured, and they thrived.

"They began to mine the land, and harvest the forests."

This is the only reference to forestry. It is written and has been read in a way that puts it squarely in the past tense, as in forestry being a thing of the past. For the people that I represent, the people of Nickel Belt, forestry is pretty much part of the present, and we all hope that it's going to be part of the future. But the throne speech does not reflect that at all.

If you go to communities throughout Nickel Belt, whether you talk about Foleyet, Mattagami, Gogama, Westree, Shining Tree and, if you go further down toward Alban and Bigwood, those people rely very much on forestry for most of their employment. If you walked through those communities right now, you would see that many of them have big rigs in their backyards. They have all sorts of forestry equipment, whether we talk about trailers or trucks, big limbers, chainsaws etc. All of the big equipment is in the back of their yards. It is collecting dust and collecting rust. It is covered with big tarps because the forestry industry has collapsed in my riding and in most of the northeast. We would have liked to have seen using forestry in a more accurate state; that is,

showing it as an industry that is part of our present and showing it as an industry that has a future in Ontario. For people of northeastern Ontario, forestry does have a future, and those people hoped that with a little help from their government, they could move forward.

An example is Fryer Forest Products, which is a company that borders David Ramsay's and my riding. Fryer has not been able to get a licence to harvest for multiple reasons. They look at the investment that the government has made in the south in the auto industry and manufacturing to keep jobs down there.

There's nothing wrong with helping people down south get jobs, but the people of the north would like to get their fair share. Getting their fair share means that there is also government help when it comes to rebuilding the forestry industry, not only the harvesting of the trees but also all of the other jobs that could be created with a secondary industry related to wood and related to wood fibres. There is a number of projects in northeastern Ontario.

Particularly in my riding, I can think of one that is to use some of the wood fibre residue at a sawmill to produce electricity. Here again, people of the north have a hard time accessing the grid. They thought they had a viable project. They thought that forestry was going to prosper, but when it came time to review their project, their project was good, but they could not access the grid.

The people of northeastern Ontario want their fair share from their government. Certainly, the opening statement of the throne speech did not bring them much hope in that direction.

Quand notre lieutenant-gouverneur a commencé le discours du trône, il a parlé de la foresterie comme une industrie du passé, une industrie qui a servi à développer notre province, mais pas une industrie qui a un présent, et encore moins un futur, dans notre province. Pour les gens que je représente dans Nickel Belt, c'était une grosse déception. Plusieurs de mes constituantes et constituants dépendent de l'industrie de la foresterie pour leur gagne-pain. Qu'on parle de places comme Foleyet, Metagama, Gogama, ou même dans le sud de mon comté, si on regarde à Bigwood ou à Alban, beaucoup de ces gens-là travaillent dans la foresterie—ou, je devrais dire, travaillaient dans la foresterie.

Quand on se promène dans les cantons, comme je fais, on se rend compte qu'il y a beaucoup d'équipements qui sont dans la cour en arrière de ces gens-là. Ils sont couverts par de gros "tarpaulins" en plastique, et tout ce qu'ils peuvent faire est de faire des paiements sur un équipement dispendieux qu'ils ne sont pas capables

d'utiliser parce que l'industrie de la foresterie vit des moments difficiles.

Ces gens-là regardent aux investissements qui ont été faits par leur gouvernement dans le sud de l'Ontario. Qu'on regarde à tout le secteur de l'automobile ou le secteur manufacturier, ils ont certainement eu de l'aide de leur gouvernement. Les gens du Nord auraient voulu voir dans le discours du trône un peu l'équivalent de ça pour les industries du Nord. Que l'on parle de la foresterie dans un contexte du passé, c'est un peu décourageant pour nous parce que dans le Nord-Est, on voit la foresterie comme une industrie présente et une industrie du futur.

La deuxième chose dont je voulais parler est encore là dans le discours du trône—the Open Ontario plan. We talk about exporting water technology. This is really, really hard to listen to.

I had just come back from a multi-First Nations visit in the north of our province. The first community I went to was Summer Beaver. I met with the staff at the nursing station and saw some of the clients. I saw two very cute little girls; I will call them Missy and her sister. Missy is about six years old, and she and her sister were both covered in a rash like I had never seen before. The nurse had tried Telemedicine, but they couldn't help them.

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That morning, when I got there, they were being airlifted out of their community to go to a hospital. They all knew that it had to do with the water, but nobody knew how to treat those two little girls. They were joyful and helpful, but very scared; they didn't want to leave their community. They're young; they were born there; this is where they belong. Going away was very scary for them, for something as basic as having clean drinking water.

When you go to those communities, lots of them get dental visits only once a year. When there is no drinking water in their community, they don't drink water, and milk is too expensive, but for some reason unknown to me, you can buy two litres of pop for the same price in Beaver and Webequie, or any of the communities, as in Nickel Belt. That means that little kids end up with dental decay. So you see a whole bunch of very cute little kids—all of their front teeth have been pulled out and their back teeth are capped because they don't have proper access to dentists. When the dentists come, they are proactive to make sure the kids don't run into problems with tooth decay, so they pull all of their front teeth out and they cap the rest of them.

This is because those communities, those kids, don't have access to drinking water. They have to buy bottled water, and when you have to buy bottled water, you don't drink much of it. You end up drinking other stuff, most of the other stuff being full of sugar.

So here you grow up with no front teeth—they still have back teeth because they've been capped, so that they can chew, but they can't bite. That means that before their adult teeth grow in, those kids will never bite into an apple, pear or peach. They cannot bite. They will never bite into a carrot. They have no front teeth, which

means that the opportunity to develop good eating habits that include fresh fruits and vegetables is very hard. In fly-in communities, produce is very expensive. Not only are they expensive, those kids—because they don't have access to fresh drinking water—also have teeth problems.

Here it is just multiplying itself into making it hard for First Nations people, especially those in fly-in communities, to develop good eating habits, to stay healthy and to have healthy teeth—all this because they don't have access to fresh drinking water, yet we see a throne speech in which—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I'd just ask that the conversations that are being held around the room respect the fact that we have a speaker. Please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, madame—a speaker who has a very hoarse voice. Let me have a little drink of water; it could help.

Here we have a throne speech that talks about all of the technologies that Ontario wants to export to the world about clean drinking water, yet last time I checked, there are 78 communities in northern Ontario that are under boil-water advisories. That was last week—78 communities. A lot of them have been under boil-water advisories for years. We're talking a decade—10 years—six, seven, five years. That means there are entire generations of kids who have never had clean drinking water, and I'm thinking: How can we export this technology that we are so good at to the world when kids in my own riding, in my own province, have never had drinking water out of the tap? They end up with all of those health problems and issues, whether it's a skin rash, lots of dental problems or poor eating habits, because they don't have drinking water, yet we're going to export this to the world? How about we look after our own first? How about we look after those kids and use that technology to give them good drinking water? I would have liked the throne speech to have talked about that, but it is not there.

One thing that the throne speech did talk about was that we are going to review the Public Hospitals Act. This is something that we have been wanting to do for a long time. I'm not sure if the part of the Public Hospitals Act that will be under review will include all of the changes we would like to see.

We just went through Bill 179, the bill that expands the scope of practice of a number—I think there were 12 altogether—of health professions. Many of them came forward and wanted change to the Public Hospitals Act. One of those particular changes they want to see is the medical advisory committee of hospitals broadened to include not only physicians but the full complement of people who provide care within the hospital setting. So far, it doesn't look like that part of the bill will be up for review, but it should be.

What they are talking about, though, is a new payment formula for hospitals. This new payment formula has been tried in other jurisdictions, especially in England, where they realized that it did not work. We can call HBAM whichever way we want to slice it, but at the end

of the day, you look at gender and age and a little bit of geographical distribution, and it never works. You either have a formula that is so complicated to apply that you waste tons of resources trying to apply this fairly, or you just look at the basics that are easy to collect, which are gender, age and a little bit of geography.

Then you always end up with the same bias; I call it the urban bias. That is, you always end up with rural and northern hospitals being at a disadvantage compared to the ones located in bigger urban areas. This fixed amount of money for procedures works for some, but it doesn't work for all. I agree that if a centre does a thousand whatever, hip replacements—that's a little much; we'll say cataract surgeries. If you do a thousand cataract surgeries every week, you will get very good at it. You will develop good practice and you will have good outcomes. But it also means that you are geographically located in one area.

Unless those centres of excellence have an incentive to travel to make sure that they are available and that we provide equity of access to all of our residents, then it won't happen. It will always be the same: The big urban centres will get to compete for a number of procedures. They will be able to do them at a cheaper price than you can do them in northern or rural Ontario. Then all of the services will be centralized there, making access an issue.

It has already started. If you look at total knee and total hip replacements, Sudbury Regional Hospital does those surgeries, but there is a long waiting list. So what happens? People from northeastern Ontario decide to go down to Toronto. But who can go down? People who are fit, people who are healthy and people who have the money to undertake the travel, which means that the people who have the highest needs end up waiting their turn in Sudbury while the people with the lower needs get to go to Toronto. This just creates a snowball effect where, if you have patients with higher needs, sure, it will be more expensive to look after them. They will need more follow-up, they will need longer hospital stays and they will need more rehab, which means that when Sudbury Regional Hospital is made to compete for a volume of total knee or total hip replacements, they will lose out. They will lose out because a healthy segment of their population is already migrating to Toronto, where they can do that surgery cheaper and faster with good outcomes partly because, out of the rural and northern area, they get all of the healthier patients. They get the patients who are able to go. They get the people who are still active, as opposed to northern and rural hospitals that don't. This new funding model will just make all of this worse.

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It is important upfront, and I would have liked to have seen this in the throne speech, to have a commitment from our government for equitable access. We realize that we're not going to have equal access; that is, if you choose to live in northern or rural Ontario, you may not have the same. Nobody wants a tertiary care centre in Naughton; we realize that. But we want equitable access.

Let's make equity part of the throne speech so that before we make any changes that will further put this urban bias onto our health care system, we commit ourselves to equity. But this is not there. What we are looking at is a system of competitions between hospitals, which will not serve the people of rural and northern Ontario well.

We've already experimented with competitive bidding in home care with disastrous results. I would have loved so much to have seen in the throne speech a real commitment to reviewing our home care system with a view to getting rid of this competitive bidding for home care, which has not served us well.

The government, to their credit, invested \$1.8 billion more in home care. What did we get out of this? Worse care, worse outcomes and less people served. This is a lose-lose for us, but we have a few American-based home care companies that made a pile of cash. I don't want our home health care resources to be going to fund for-profit American-based care. I want the money that will be invested in our health care system to go to front-line services. I didn't see any of this in the throne speech. I sure hope that the budget brings better news.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have no doubt, since I listened very carefully to my colleague from Nickel Belt, that she tries to improve the conditions of the people in northern Ontario. I've been to Nickel Belt a number of times. In fact, I have my undergraduate degree from Laurentian University, so I have some idea. While I was there, I grew very fond of the people of Nickel Belt and Sudbury. I have no doubt we admire all of them for their hard work.

But I was expecting that you would indicate a bit more of the positive nature and the positive issues that are found in this throne speech. It can't just be all negative.

If we start from a negative perspective, oh, by golly, you don't remember anymore what happened to the NDP when they were in power? Fourteen mills shut down, the highest unemployment rate ever in the province of Ontario in northern Ontario, and \$60 million taken out of the northern Ontario heritage fund. Whereas, what did the Liberals do? What do you find in the throne speech? What's our record? To some degree you were beginning, you were just starting to say, "to the credit of the government." But then you stopped right there, and you began to be critical, and you began to protest again, which is, of course, a natural part of the NDP, to protest, whereas the Liberal Party is the party of progress.

I just want to remind you of what is also in the throne speech that is very important, and that is the Premier has recognized that we have to compete. We have to compete internationally. How best to do that? How best do we prepare our students to compete internationally with all those countries that are called the tigers of the East? The best way to do it is through education. The Liberals have recognized that, and I congratulate them because it's part of the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The first thing I want to do is compliment my friend from Nickel Belt on, I think, a very thoughtful and interesting discourse on the throne speech, with specific references to the issues that she has to face every day in her riding, and that's what this debate is about. It's not about looking for positives in the throne speech, as my friend opposite has to say. We, on this side of the House, are opposition. Our job is to oppose. So while the government sets out its vision, our job is to say, "Your vision is lacking somewhat in certain areas."

The first thing that struck me was the focus that my friend from Nickel Belt put on the forestry industry and the fact that so much machinery is mothballed and so many jobs lie unfulfilled because they don't exist anymore. The government has not even made passing reference to the forestry industry in the throne speech at all.

I am not a northerner. I'm a southerner, and I'm very conscious of the fact that there is a divide between north and south and that northerners feel that they get—and I think rightfully so, by the way—short shrift from the south. I have had a lot of interaction with the north lately, and very particularly with the forestry industry, in talking to the folks at Grant Forest Products. That has been the subject of a number of questions that I've raised with the government in this House.

One of the things that has come to light is that there are hundreds of millions of dollars in funds that relate to the forestry industry that are not being used, that could be used, not even in terms of real money but just loan guarantees to make progress in the forestry industry, to revitalize the north, to give some people back their jobs who need jobs. It's just lying fallow on the part of the government, with not so much as a reasonable response from the Minister of Northern Affairs. That's the thing that has to be underlined. That's what my friend is trying to underline, and I congratulate her for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I too want to congratulate and thank the member from Nickel Belt for her comments and certainly her passion for the north and for her riding. She gave us a good summary of the problems that relate to the lack of clean water and whatnot.

I would like to talk about that just for a moment. I had a chance yesterday to make a few comments about the opportunities that we will have in exporting our expertise and technology. That's what it's really all about: that we get here in Ontario that opportunity to showcase to the world and give that opportunity to the world what we do best, and that is to plan for and to have the expertise in purifying and cleaning water and whatnot. That is what's going to be given to those countries that want it, and we know that there are many that have already indicated their interest in getting some of that expertise. I know that because we have a company in my own riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry that is very interested, not only in Ontario but throughout the world, in helping to bring clean water to those who want it.

Just yesterday I had the director of the Upper Canada District School Board in my office. He was talking about those opportunities in China for educating. In our throne speech we're looking to give opportunities to 20,000 more students in our colleges and universities and to give opportunities for foreign students to come here. Certainly they want that. I know that the director of the Upper Canada board would like to see more pre-college and -university students coming to our province to receive education. Those are all the opportunities that are going to be given here in this Open Ontario plan that we had in the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to also compliment the member from Nickel Belt. I have the greatest respect for the work that she does, both in the Legislature here as well as in the community as well as in committees. In fact, I think she, with the health coalition, has been travelling the province, working very hard to raise awareness and education of the lack of adequate funding in long-term care, as well as hospital-based services and community-based services.

In her response, she was saying that the lack of attention to the north is extremely important as well. She's a very strong, very effective voice for not only Nickel Belt, the region where she is the member, but also for the issue of health care broadly and, more specifically, issues facing the north.

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I think that if one looks at this throne speech and the debate on it—I'm disappointed. It's the lack of having a vision for the province, a lack of courtesy to the different sectors within the province, and it's as if there is a Dalton McGuinty plan that Father Knows Best. That's ultimately what I see in it, and I will have the privilege this morning, I hope, to speak on this throne speech. I might possibly be the last speaker on it—it's not the last word.

Again, I want to pay tribute to the member from Nickel Belt and her strong voice for the north. As my good friend from Thornhill has said in his questions—relentless questions, I might add—on the forest industry. There's a lack of a significant plan or the flexibility of the government to work to find solutions for specific sectors, whether it's on the waste-to-energy issue within the north that was brought up in her remarks, or to find a resolution to the financial stress for one of the companies that Mr. Shurman has spoken about. Again, she's a strong, effective voice and I think her remarks are a tribute to her, but also a condemnation of the government's lack of a plan and vision for the north and for many—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt has time to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the members from Davenport, Thornhill, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and Durham for their comments. Yes, I'm in opposition, so as for the comments for the member from Davenport, I listened to the throne speech with a view of

my constituents. When I listen for my constituents, I have to think forestry, I have to think clear water because it doesn't seem to mean the same thing to the people of Nickel Belt and of northern Ontario as to the people who wrote the throne speech. It is not negative. I also brought forward solutions that could be included, hopefully, in the budget when it comes on Thursday.

Sure, I listened with an ear that represents the people that I'm here to represent, but I also bring forward some suggestions that I hope they will listen to and act upon.

Certainly I agree with the member from Thornhill. I'm here to represent the people of Nickel Belt, so when I look at the throne speech, like when I look at everything else, I look through the eyes of my constituents to make sure that they are well represented. He is right that I hear it quite a bit: We don't mind the government helping the people of the south get through this recession and get jobs in the auto and manufacturing industries; we just don't want to be left behind. We don't want to be forgotten. We want our fair share. I hear this all the time. People come in to my office after having lost their jobs in forestry or other industries in the north, and all they want is a fair share from the Ontario government. Right now, they don't feel like they are getting this.

The exporting of our expertise in clean water technology: Start exporting it to the people of northern Ontario first, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to indicate at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with the very distinguished member from Essex.

I'd like to talk about the throne speech to show a contrast between looking forward to a future, as our Ontario government does, that's bright and prosperous, and compare that with a vision of sticking your head into the sand and hoping that when you pull it out the 1950s will have returned, such as the Conservatives have.

Let's start by looking at the global recession. Again, as a contrast, the PCs spent a whole year pretending that the recession wasn't happening, and then they proposed out-and-out panic as a response when it did begin, suggesting that in response to the recession, the only thing that the government of Ontario really ought to do would be to completely dismantle education, health care and our social programs as perhaps the only solution. Our government never agreed with that; Ontarians never agreed with that approach.

What Ontarians wanted was to have their government prepare this province to compete in the aftermath of the global recession. The Conservatives said that Ontario was toast until and unless the United States recovered, and if we couldn't sell to America, then we probably shouldn't be doing business anywhere else. Our government didn't agree with that approach. Our government has patiently, persistently and successfully opened new markets for what Ontario does and for the services that Ontarians can perform in markets like India, China and Europe. While the American market was flat, and the

Conservatives said that we ought to hunker down and basically do nothing unless and until America dug itself out, this year, China is projecting 10% growth and India is projecting about 7.6% growth.

How important are those markets? Comparing China with Ontario, China outnumbers Ontario 100 to 1. That's an immense market. India outnumbers Ontario 85 to 1. A market like Brazil, which I'm sure the members opposite look upon as a Third World market—we don't. We know it's an emerging market, and we know that Brazil outnumbers us here in Ontario 15 to 1. We also know that Europe is a market that's larger than the United States of America. Europe is a First World market. As Ontarians, we are not in Europe to the degree that we should be. As a measure of how much potential there is in that European market, consider that just one US company alone, the Home Depot, sells more to and from Canada than the country of France. That gives us an idea of how much untapped potential there is for Ontario in Europe, in India, in Brazil and in China. Our government is there, and that party says we shouldn't be.

To again compare and contrast, when this global recession hit Ontario, this government responded with an aggressive stimulus plan; those parties on the other side said we shouldn't do it. Our government invested in infrastructure to create jobs; they opposed it. Our government introduced new training programs for laid-off workers; they opposed them and criticized them. We believed in Ontarians; they didn't. In the next five years, we're going to have a decisive period for our province. That's why we have a new five-year plan to open up Ontario to new growth and to new jobs. They don't believe in Ontarians. Our plan is going to prepare Ontario to compete in the global economy that those parties opposite pretend doesn't exist. We're going to emerge from this recession much, much stronger than we were when we went in.

Our party, our government and Ontarians believe that tax acts are just pieces of law that need to stay in touch with their times. We believe that tax acts exist to serve Ontarians. Contrast that with the attitude opposite. The Progressive Conservatives believe Ontarians are here to serve the tax act, and that a Cold War relic such as the expensive, out-of-date, cumbersome and inefficient provincial sales tax is in fact a monument to a distant past Conservative government and must therefore never, ever be changed at all for any reason whatsoever.

To that Ontarians say, "Rubbish. We can do better. We will do better." Ontarians don't believe that we should never be able to compete in China, in India, in South America and in Europe. We believe that those are our markets, just as they are anybody else's markets. Ontarians don't believe that if the USA has a dumb and inefficient sales tax system, then ours ought to be at least as stupid and as expensive. We reject that approach.

Our government does not believe that Ontarians should never be able to compete in this world, and that's why Ontario is adopting a lean, efficient and money-saving means of assessing a sales tax. That's why, on our

government's watch, Ontario has now gained a sustainable competitive advantage over our US competitors. We intend to keep that advantage. We intend to keep that advantage, because it's the right thing to do and it's the smart thing to do for Ontarians.

This throne speech is just a piece in the mosaic that spells out a five-year plan to ensure that Ontario is the best place on the North American continent to start a business, to grow a business and, very importantly, to relocate a business. We're there.

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We believe in health care. We contrast that with the party opposite that seems to take its lead from—and in the spirit of the times—the United States' Republican Party, which absolutely is adamantly opposed to public health care. We believe in that. It gives us a sustainable competitive advantage right here in Canada. Ontario businesses know full well that Ontario-style one-payer health care allows them a competitive advantage that they cannot get in a plant south of the border.

Since we formed government, we've worked with health professionals to lower wait times—wait times that continue to go lower. Contrast that with the party opposite that, on their watch in government, never even measured wait times. But if you measure it, you can manage it. And if you can manage it, you can lower it, you can optimize it and you can control your costs, and that's exactly what Ontario has seen in the last seven years.

Look at some results: 900,000 more Ontarians have access to a family doctor. Where do you find the lowest wait times in the entire country? Ontario—shorter wait times for cancer surgeries; shorter wait times for MRIs.

When we were elected in 2003, my hospital, Credit Valley Hospital, had a new cancer centre that had just opened, and it had bays for six linear accelerators. We had two. On our watch, we now have all six. Not coincidentally, we've now seen our wait times in western Mississauga, where we have a strong, growing population, go down even as our population grows. We need to do more, because health care is a journey, not a destination.

Health care is also expensive. Just 20 years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs was spent on health care. Today it's 46 cents.

Beginning next year, in 2011, the first of the baby boom generation, the largest demographic bubble that Canada has ever seen and, indeed, North America has ever seen—those first baby boomers turn 65. For every senior alive today, when we baby boomers are ourselves in the peak of our senior years, there will be two seniors. For every person aged 80 or above alive today, when we baby boomers ourselves become octogenarians, there will be three. Those are immense challenges for us. They mean that we have to manage our health care programs properly. The thinking and planning that we do now is going to mean the difference, if you're a baby boomer, between whether the health care that you've grown up around is going to be there when you need it most or whether it won't be.

On our watch, our thinking has been directed to ensure that an entire baby boom generation that has built this country over the last 20 years can look forward to reliable, cost-effective and available health care when and where they need it as they age.

Of course, the members opposite have voted against that at every single turn. I know they don't believe in health care for the baby boom generation. I know their plan is to neglect them and to simply say, "Sorry, we can't afford it. You're out of the boat. Go buy it yourself." But that's not the way that we've run our government, and that's not the way we will run our government. That's part of the reason that this throne speech has focused as heavily as it has on health care.

We need to hold our health care providers accountable for the money they get, and we need to ensure that those programs provide improved services for patients. That's part of the vision of where this throne speech is taking Ontario.

This throne speech says that Ontario is going to introduce new legislation to improve care in our hospitals and ask that our hospitals tap into the expertise of all health care professionals. This throne speech says that our government is going to improve services for patients by encouraging health care professionals to work together. That's exactly what health care professionals want to do, and that's what patients expect them to do.

We intend to create an independent expert body to provide recommendations on some of the best clinical practice guidelines. It ensures that future investments actually get the results that they set out to get and that they improve patient health.

In the last year and a half, our government has borrowed a lot of money, which really says something from a bunch of fiscally prudent managers who love balanced budgets. We borrowed a ton of money, and unlike the government from which we took power, we're not concealing a deficit. We're going to be upfront about this, and if we borrowed it, we'll lay out a plan to pay it back. That means opening Ontario to new jobs and growth, and that means our government has to manage and focus on those things, some of which I've outlined, that truly make us stronger.

As a government, we eliminated the deficit that we inherited from the former Conservative government, and before the recession hit, our government delivered three balanced budgets, three surpluses in a row. That's a record that we're going back to.

I'd like to conclude on that and let the member from Essex take the rest of the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Essex.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm delighted today to stand in support of the throne speech given by the Lieutenant Governor, which gives the sense of the direction that your government wants to go in the next five years, and to comment on a couple of areas of our Open Ontario plan.

My friend from Mississauga–Streetsville has made a very poignant discussion on some of the issues that have

touched a sore point with the opposition. Now that you're riled up, it's my job to settle you back down. So I'll try not to get you too excited, although I do want to point out two areas in the throne speech that, from my point of view, need particular attention.

I'll quote from one of them: "Your government will also support growth and expansion in our agri-food sector by working through Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to create new opportunities to buy local food, and open up new markets outside the province—because the world needs the good things that grow in Ontario."

I wholeheartedly agree with that, and I would encourage all members of the Legislature to support that kind of thrust in our throne speech. There is no area, I think, more diversified in agriculture in the province than in southwestern Ontario and, if I might boast just a little, in particular, in Essex county. My friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex shares that.

Mr. Kim Craitor: And around the lake.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My friend from Niagara Falls says that Niagara Falls is included in it. So there's my point: Southwestern Ontario is the most diversified agricultural area in the whole of Canada, and I would suggest that it would compare to many other parts of the world. There are two opportunities we have that we can encourage and have been working on, and that is to buy local.

If you think about buying local, it goes far beyond just supporting your own industry in your own area. It affects the environment when food doesn't have to be transported long distances. The quality of the food when you buy it at your local market hasn't travelled long distances. Can you imagine what it makes on our carbon imprint to bring a truckload of tomatoes from Mexico? Can you imagine, when those tomatoes were picked, what point in their growth they had to be in so they would be at least edible when they reach Canada?

I go to my local grocery store and I see tomatoes there that were grown in Mexico. The first thing I do is go to the manager and say, "I'm not going to buy any of your tomatoes because they're imported from Mexico and we grow them literally down the street." The manager will give me the excuse that there's nothing he can do about it because it's head office down in Toronto that decides where they're going to buy their produce from and at what price. But I think if enough of us go to the managers of these grocery stores and say, "We're not going to buy your produce," it wouldn't take very long, I suspect, before somebody down here in Toronto at the head office of that grocery store would hear what we have to say, and it's going to affect the jingle in their pockets. When you can do something that affects the jingle in their pockets, they'll start to listen to you. So I encourage everyone, whenever they buy, wherever they buy their produce, that they insist on locally grown produce. If we don't grow it, well, I suspect not too many people eat it, but sure, if there are specialty products that you can't get grown here in southwestern Ontario, go ahead and buy those.

We encourage our folks to do that because it helps the local economy, number one, but I think just as importantly, it helps our environment and the quality of the food exceeds the quality of food that's grown anywhere else in the world.

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The second point of the throne speech that I'd like to emphasize and point out to you is the Water Opportunities Act that will be introduced in the Legislature. In Essex county, where I live, of course, on three sides of my riding is water. On the north is Lake St. Clair, on the west is the Detroit River and on the south is one of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie. I'm virtually surrounded by water, so clean water is something that we are very understanding of in my part of the province. You know, folks, there is little in this world that is more important than water. We can go for a number of days—particularly some of us could go for a number of days—without eating very much, but we can't go very long without fresh water.

There are many parts of this world where fresh water is becoming a very valuable and depleting resource. We're told it's a \$400-billion-a-year industry of creating clean water and ways that we technically can take bad water—salty water, contaminated water—and turn it into clean water. I can tell you, that's an opportunity for the manufacturing businesses in my area, in the Essex-Windsor area, which have been hit so hard by the manufacturing losses we have suffered in this last worldwide recession.

So we can take that expertise in creating good, clean, potable water and combine that with our expertise in manufacturing—those tool and die industries down our way that can produce the equipment that will take the technology that we have to create clean, potable water. We can export that technology and those manufactured items to the rest of the world.

Those are only two areas of this throne speech, this Open Ontario plan, and we have to look ahead. We can't look back. I'm a private pilot and I always say the runway behind you is absolutely worthless. It's the runway ahead that's really valuable to you. So I say to us, take this vision, turn it into something that's good for Ontario, and I know that our future not only will be as good as the past, it will be better than the past, and I want us all to enjoy that better future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I couldn't help but think when I was listening to the member from Mississauga-Streetsville that he must have been auditioning for a role in 1984. The double-think that went into his speech was just incredible. Here he is talking about and conveying Conservative views in such a totally false fashion—just absolutely amazing.

I also have to talk about the member from Essex. Ontario has faced significant hardships. The loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, the closure of 62 forestry mills, the loss of 45,000 forestry jobs, and

what do we hear from this government? Instead of talking about those important things, the member from Essex would rather talk about the carbon footprint of a Mexican tomato. It's really atrocious and astounding that this Liberal government can have its head in the sand and talk about platitudes with rhetoric and have no substance in the throne speech whatsoever—no substance.

I'll just go on to further say that last time we were in the House, I mentioned—there is a word called “daltonism.” It's a legitimate, real word: daltonism. It's the inability to distinguish between red and green, and that's what this Liberal government is suffering from. Whenever they see something green, we know it's going to put us in the red. This Liberal government and the comments on it, I just find totally unresponsive and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions? The member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to hear the member from Mississauga–Streetsville's little jab toward Sudbury and our relationship with the people of Brazil.

I had the pleasure to attend a rally yesterday where there were many representatives from Brazil, and I can assure you that the people of Sudbury welcome the Brazilian people and certainly have no grudge with the people of Brazil. They do not care too much, though, about one particular Brazilian company: Vale do Rio Doce, better known in Sudbury as Vale Inco. To confuse the two is to show really very little respect for the people of Sudbury. There were people from Australia, from Germany, from Indonesia and many people from Brazil who came yesterday to support the over 3,000 Vale Inco workers represented by United Steelworkers Local 6500 at their rally—to show their support, but they also know that they do this in co-operation and with the full support of the people of Brazil.

I had the opportunity to travel to Brazil and meet with representatives from the Brazilian government, and I can tell you that they aspired to come to the standards that we have for our workers. It is the Workers' Party that is in power in Brazil right now, led by President Lula, and they certainly look at what the people in Ontario have been able to achieve. Whether we look at the wages that allow us to have a healthy middle class, whether you look at the benefits, things as simple as being paid for a day off when you're sick—those are all things that we share with Brazil.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Essex and Mississauga–Streetsville for their comments this morning. I have had an opportunity to hear some of the comments that have been made on a regular basis in the Legislature in response to our throne speech. I want to thank all members for their contributions.

One of the themes that has been coming forward in response to the throne speech from some of the oppo-

sition members continues to deal with forestry and the challenges related to forestry in Ontario, primarily northern Ontario and more specifically northwestern Ontario. I think it's a bit unfortunate to hear the simplistic arguments that continue to be put on the record by members of the opposition. For whatever reason—I guess it's one of those advertising things: You figure that if you keep repeating the same message over and over again, after a while, enough people are going to start to believe you.

Just to take one point on the forestry industry in northwestern Ontario—northern Ontario generally—in 2003 when we were elected, the Canadian dollar stood at 73 cents. One or two years ago, maybe three years ago, it topped out at \$1.10. Today, it's around \$1 or 98 cents—I'm not sure what it's at today. That's an incredible appreciation in the value of the Canadian currency relative to the American currency. One penny of appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar relative to the American dollar adds a \$3-million to \$4-million expense to one AbitibiBowater mill, the one in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan in the province of Ontario. Some \$3 million to \$4 million on one cent of appreciation in the Canadian currency times 35 or 45 cents; that's over \$100 million to their bottom line. That's one AbitibiBowater mill in Ontario. In my riding, it's like a \$100-million expense on their bottom line. Corporately in the province, times the number of mills that they have, it's much more significant than that, and yet the members of the opposition want to stand up there day after day, year after year, continuing to convey this ridiculously simplistic message when it comes to forestry in this province—

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. Bill Mauro:—just the truth once in a while.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. I'd ask you to withdraw that.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'll withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: Respectfully, I thought the member from Mississauga–Streetsville read the notes that were prepared for him by the minister quite nicely. I think he's an effective reader.

The member from Essex: I thought his comments were quite genuine and thoughtful. He didn't stray too much from the message track of the government; I understand that.

Mr. Mauro, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan: When he was standing up for the forest industry, he took some credit for the increase in the dollar. I would say that the issue there, Bill—you actually have it wrong. When the currency—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. Your comments to the—

Mr. John O'Toole: When the currency increases in Canada, it disfavours your company. I want you to go back to Economics 101—and I'm not being critical. I'm

trying to help you. It disadvantages Canadian industry when the dollar goes up. I'm telling you; look it up. I have the greatest respect for the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Direct your comments—

Mr. John O'Toole: —to the Speaker. She likes to have her time as well. I'm actually having an opportunity to—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: My hands are up.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: He's using sign language.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's all sign language.

My point is, all of their comments aren't addressing the fundamental issues of the decline in the Ontario economy. That's the real truth here in the observations on the economy: They promise one thing and do another thing. They promised a million jobs, but they've actually lost 150,000 jobs.

I'll have more to say on this in the next few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to acknowledge the comments by the members for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and Durham. I guess the truth still does hurt Conservatives.

Our government does not believe that some animals or some tomatoes are created more equal than others.

I wish the member from Durham would stop reading those talking points from the kids who work out of the corner office on the third floor and just tell us what he thinks, because I think he actually does support us.

To the member for Nickel Belt: Our government definitely believes that Ontarians and Brazilians ought to get to know one another better and do a great deal more business together. We speak almost every language in the world right here in Ontario, and that's a big competitive advantage. The whole world has people who now call themselves Ontarians. That's part of the reason why this speech from the throne lays out a very clear blueprint for reaching beyond where we are now and ensuring that as Ontarians, we're best positioned to do business everywhere in the world, with every culture and every people in every language—a strength that we uniquely possess here.

To the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan: He gets it. He knows that if Ontario is going to find a sustainable market for what the north does and what the north has, then we need to reach out to those parts of the world that need what we have, that need to use what we have in abundance so they can continue to progress. This is a symbiotic world. What you do in one part of the world has an implication and impact in every other.

This throne speech is part of a series of documents and policies. It will be continued, I'm sure, in the budget this week, which lays out a progressive, successful, sustainable future for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. Hopefully I'll be the last speaker for the 12 hours that have been debated on the throne speech.

I have a copy here for those viewing today. This throne speech was delivered on March 8, and here we are on March 23, we're still talking about it, but really, actually, nothing has been done.

I want to start by thanking the Honourable David Onley for reading the speech prepared by Premier McGuinty so eloquently. There's no question it was very eloquently delivered in the Legislature. I also want to say that the media overview was rather a neutral interpretation of Premier McGuinty's speech. I'm going to take a small survey of the media here. Now, I'm not making this up. I'm actually trying to bring some third party commentary to the debate.

Here's one here from the Toronto Sun. It says: "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas." That's what the paper said. This is on March 9, the day after: "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas." We like to think of it as they're out of gas; they're sputtering. The economy's going this way and the spending is going this way. They're in chaos, collapse, much like—Madam Speaker, through you—the time when I was the chair of the budget in Durham, in Clarington, in my riding. I met with Ed Philip and Floyd Laughren. Their economy was going into the tank, the NDP, and the expenditures for social programs and needed programs were going this way. They were out of control and they finally evoked the social contract. I think this article is quite accurate. I'd encourage people to read it.

On the other side of it, the same clipping, it's here—this is the Toronto Star. The Toronto Star is the Liberal-friendly media rag. We call it the Liberal briefing notes. It says, "No Big Cuts, Despite Deficit." They have no plan to deal with it.

Now, what is the deficit? Let's put things in perspective. The budget is approximately \$106 billion and the deficit is \$25 billion. So, in other words, they're borrowing about 25 cents on every dollar they're spending. That's like a household buying a new car just after one of the parents lost their job. That's the equivalent.

This really comes down to jobs and the economy. There is no plan in this, not just for my riding of Durham but for Ontario. It's a dismal—I'm just repeating what the media says here: "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas." And they have a list here. It says, "\$400-billion-a-year demand for clean-water technology." Sounds good; where's the money? You're going to pay it when you turn on the tap, just like you're going to pay when you turn on the switch for electricity.

Green energy, very nice idea—excellent idea, in fact, implemented with the right kind of tools, technology and partnerships with the universities? No, they went to Korea, to get the jobs and the technology from Korea. What an insult to our universities of Toronto, Western, Waterloo to have to go to—I just can't believe the lack of confidence in our own institutions. When you think about it, what signal is that to our innovation economy? The

work done by Richard Florida and Roger Martin on innovation and creativity: There isn't a word in here about that except to go to Ms. Pupatello, the minister, going over to China and India and all over the world. It should be here. It's not buy Korea, it's buy Ontario, buy Canada. There's nothing in here on this and I'm so gravely disappointed.

Here's another very excellent article I recommend to the viewers and those listening or reading Hansard at some future date. This one is from the *Globe and Mail*, a reasonable, balanced paper, often pro-government, which is fine. But here's what it says: "Canada's Greece?" We're all following Greece and the European Common Market and their problems. They're in the tank; they're falling off the cliff. That's what they said. This is done by a renowned expert, Boyd Erman. "Canada's Greece? Ontario Better Get Its Act Together" is what it says.

But not only that—the legitimacy for these comments isn't mine. I'm going to read these. What it says here is "former central bank Governor David Dodge"—this guy is brilliant. He exceeds anything I or anyone else here, including the Premier, could ever say on the economy. This says that David Dodge suggests it is "a significant 'structural' deficit that will persist and grow even worse when the economy fully rebounds." We have a structural deficit just like Greece. He goes on: "Mr. Dodge told a business audience in Toronto last week that Ontario's spending is outpacing revenue growth so quickly that the result will be a structural deficit" of 3.5% of the province's economy by 2020.

Each point in the economy represents about a billion and a half dollars of revenue when it goes up. When it goes down, you lose the revenue of \$1.5 billion and your expenditures go up. What do I see now? The perfect storm, because that's exactly what's happening. I say it with some anguish, and I see nothing from the Premier or his finance minister—absolutely no plan. They avoided the questions that were asked by our leader, Tim Hudak, yesterday on the rising price of energy. This is a non-discretionary product. People—seniors in their homes; students; elderly, frail people that have oxygen in their homes—energy prices are going to double.

Why do I say that? There's quite an interesting part. The new tax, the \$56-billion tax, has been added to the electricity bill, and it's only about four cents—right now they're selling wind power. They're getting companies in my riding, wind power and solar power—solar power: 80 cents a kilowatt hour, but they're selling it for four and a half to five cents, so they're subsidizing it by 70-some cents a kilowatt hour.

We all say, "I would like to be like Denmark as well." What's the price of energy in Denmark? It's 34 cents. What is our energy? It's about five or six cents. That means your electricity bill of \$200 a month—I'm talking directly to the seniors of Ontario—is going to be \$600. Write a letter to Dalton McGuinty or, better still, in October 2011, mark the ballot for someone that stands up for you, as opposed to one solution fits all, the big solution—our guys.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 42(a), there have been 12 hours of debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am now required to put the question.

On March 9, 2010, Mr. Johnson moved, seconded by Mrs. Van Bommel, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

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

All those in favour of Mr. Johnson's motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote is deferred until deferred votes following question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from York West, to welcome students from Cardinal McGuigan high school and their teacher, Mr. Joseph Pulcini, who will be joining us today in the east gallery.

On behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Catia Marceau, we'd like to welcome her mother, Giulia Marceau, to the east members' gallery.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Colin Boyle, I'd like to welcome his father, Bill Boyle, to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the member from Ottawa–Orléans and page Anne-Marie Chamberland, we'd like to welcome her father, Denys Chamberland, here today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I don't know if I missed it, but Mary Beth Caliciuri is here. She is Anthony Caliciuri's mom, and he's one of our pages from North Bay. Welcome to her.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to welcome Connie Neilipovitz, who is visiting with her son Ben, who is a page here in the Legislature. Welcome again, Connie.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Acting Premier: As the Acting Premier knows, due to uncontrolled spending in recent years, the global crisis and a record budget

deficit, Greece finds itself teetering on the brink of economic devastation. So it has come as a shock to Ontario families to hear experts like David Rosenberg of investment firm Gluskin Sheff say that Dalton McGuinty's own record deficits and debt mean that Ontario "risks becoming the Greece of Canada within a decade or two." Similar comments have been made by Moody's and David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor.

Acting Premier, can you imagine how much greater the shock of Ontario families when they find out that unemployment in Ontario is actually higher than unemployment in Greece?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I was pleased when the bond rating agencies maintained Ontario's credit rating last year after the budget. I'm also pleased that in fact this government, unlike previous governments, actually paid down debt for its first six years.

There is no doubt that countries like Greece and others, who have a much worse record in terms of deficit and debt, have much higher deficit-to-GDP ratios, much higher deficit-to-revenue ratios than Ontario—not even in the same category—are confronting challenges.

But the plan this government has laid out is the right plan. It will get us back to balance. It will build on the great strengths of this province. It's a plan, unlike a plan that they have yet to present.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Ontario under Dalton McGuinty is on track to actually doubling its debt. We find out the minister has no plan to get the books back in order. Not only is unemployment in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario higher than in Greece; Ontario has fallen behind 100 countries, including Bulgaria, the Central African Republic and South Korea.

In fact, we don't even have to look outside North America to see a frightening comparison. California's economy is in such bad shape, it has many wondering whether the state will collapse under its own debt and be bailed out by the national government in the States. California's population is three times larger than Ontario's. Acting Premier, why is Ontario's deficit just as big and bad as California's?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, California can't run deficits, and that's why they're laying off teachers and firefighters, closing schools and closing hospitals. That is what that leader and his party will do. They will close schools. They will close hospitals. They will lay off teachers. They will lay off nurses. They will cut the very services that are extremely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —closing hospitals, closing schools, laying off teachers, laying off nurses. We saw that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. I'm finding it extremely difficult to hear both the questions and the answers.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's their plan. Premier McGuinty and this government have a plan to build on our public services while restoring a balanced budget over a period of time. There's no doubt that jurisdictions around the world are coping with these problems. Ontario is no different. Unlike that member, this government has a plan that will work for a better future—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: We don't need any lectures from this finance minister who's running the biggest deficit in the history of the province while laying off nurses, while closing down ERs and handing out sweetheart deals to his Liberal friends.

I ask you to look across the border in your hometown to Michigan. Michigan, as we all know, is having very difficult times. It's a state much like Ontario, but unemployment in Ontario is actually higher than in Ann Arbor, Lansing or Kalamazoo. Michigan has a higher standard of living and a lower population.

But the Ontario PC caucus believes that Ontario's best days are still ahead of us. We believe Ontario can lead again. I'll ask the minister to stop following the example of Greece, stop following the example of California, and bring forward a budget that will actually lower taxes and create jobs in the province of Ontario—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Unlike California, unlike Michigan, unlike Ohio, unlike West Virginia, employment has gone up 95,000 in Ontario since last May. We still have more to do.

Unfortunately, there are far too many people out of work in this province, but that leader and his party want to put more people out of work. They want to put nurses out of work. They want to put teachers out of work. They want to close more hospitals than the 39 they closed the last time they were in office. The people of Ontario rejected that once; they'll reject it again. They will embrace a plan that builds on the great strengths of this province and will restore prosperity to this great province in a meaningful and balanced way over the course of the next few years.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: No doubt the desperate cry of the finance minister drowning in debt and job losses that have taken Ontario from being an engine in Canada to a have-not province—six years of Liberal failure that cost us 200,000 jobs in 2009 alone.

Today, through Facebook, I'm launching 10for2010.ca, our Ontario PC caucus website with 10 good ideas that, if implemented immediately, will get

Ontario's economy back on course and help create well-paying jobs again.

One of the ideas is to suspend payroll taxes. Why you'd want to tax businesses finally hiring today is beyond me. Minister, will you adopt the PC plan to suspend payroll taxes and help create jobs in our province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. He might want to talk to his federal colleagues who are raising employment insurance premiums—almost \$12 billion over the next two years to help pay down their deficit.

I hope his 10 plans don't include closing 39 more hospitals like they did before. I hope his 10 points do not involve calling nurses hula hoops—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North will please come to order.

Minister.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: I hope his 10 points don't include shutting down child care in this province the way his federal brethren want to do. I hope his 10 points don't involve laying off more water inspectors or laying off environmental inspectors. I hope your plan doesn't include saying one thing and doing another, like you did on the HST.

There's no doubt Ontario faces challenges. Premier McGuinty has got—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess the finance minister hasn't seen the Facebook video that launches 10for2010.ca, because the nanny Premier banned access to Facebook among government computers in our province. When you go home and visit my Facebook page, you'll see another plan to help small businesses coping with the growing creep of red tape that has come across the Dalton McGuinty government. In our 10for2010.ca plan, we're calling for a reinstatement of the Red Tape Commission and a freeze on your job-killing regulations until that commission is in place. We believe that small businesses need to be freed up for what they do best: creating jobs and investing in our province.

Minister, will you follow our advice and help cut red tape in the province and create jobs again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, I hope on his Facebook page he'll tell small business why he voted against the 20% tax cut we gave them in our last budget. I hope he'll tell small businesses why he voted against removing all of those other tax impediments to small business growing in this province. I hope he'll tell them on Facebook that his own expert witness says that this government has a plan to create 600,000 jobs over the next 10 years. That's not our witness. That's their witness.

That member and his people can put as many plans on Facebook as they want. I suppose it will be the Facebook Common Sense Revolution. Ontario rejected that once, and they'll reject it again. This government has a plan. That party has no plan. Ontario's—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here we go again. Part of their promise is somehow to create a million new jobs in Ontario when we lost 200,000 last year alone—they say that by slapping 8% down on gas for your car, heat for your home and all kinds of new services, that's somehow going to create jobs in our province. This is definitely a finance minister who's lost in Wonderland.

Also on our 10for2010.ca website, the minister will see a good plan to review runaway spending, following other North American jurisdictions, to bring in a sunset review for every agency, board and commission to justify it's existence and find better ways to improve quality of services, starting with your local health integration networks, which have diverted \$200 million out of health care into bureaucracy.

Minister, will you at least implement a sunset—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We constantly review all programs and services. Indeed, the rate of growth in expenditures in this government under the last few years is far below the rate of growth in expenditures of that government. The member and his Facebook friends like Mike Harris and others—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That plan was rejected seven years ago, and it will be rejected by the people of Ontario again. They want their governments to balance budgets, and we will. But we will do so as we make crucial investments to preserve the important gains we've made in health care, in education, in child care and in child services. There's no doubt that there are difficult decisions. This government takes them and takes them in the best interests of the people of Ontario, unlike what that member and his party did when they were—

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

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The McGuinty government's throne speech claimed clean water technology would bring thousands of jobs to Ontario, but just two days after the throne speech was delivered, General Electric announced that they would be closing a clean water technology plant in Burlington and moving operations to Hungary. Was this part of the McGuinty government's plan?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The undertakings the government has made in the area of clean water are very important, and there is no doubt that as we move forward and try to build that better future for this province there will be setbacks. There will also be gains associated with embracing new technologies and new industries in a way that that member and her party don't want to do.

We want to build a better future for Ontario, and the throne speech is the first part of that. We'll have more to say about it in the upcoming budget.

I reject the premise of her question. We believe Ontario will seize and will build this great new industry in Ontario—22,000 jobs already. We're going to move forward, while she and her party want to move backward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The technology used in that plant was designed right here in Ontario. Zenon was a world leader in water filtration with roots here in Ontario. Now the company is owned by GE, which is planning to build a centre of excellence for clean water technology in Hungary and taking good jobs out of Ontario. When this government waxed on about opening Ontario to the world, is that what it meant?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That is precisely why we need a Water Opportunities Act to ensure that we do everything we can to prevent that sort of thing from happening. I hope the member and her party will embrace this legislative opportunity, which will help us work in this growing industry.

She's right: It's a competitive world out there. When she proposes to raise corporate taxes, she proposes to chase those companies out of Ontario. When she talks about issues like this, that just builds our resolve to bring in the act. My hope is that she and her party will support the act to ensure that situations like that don't happen again. That is precisely why we're bringing in this kind of legislation.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier and his ministers talk about Open Ontario, but all I see are plants closing and more jobs disappearing day after day after day.

Yesterday, the Minister of Trade claimed that she had a secret plan to save 550 jobs at Siemens. Those jobs have gone to North Carolina. Now the McGuinty government tells us they have a plan to create clean water jobs, but those jobs are already gone too, to Hungary. When it comes to jobs, why should we believe anything—anything at all—that this government has to say?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In spite of the downturn in the world economy since last May, Ontario has seen more than 90,000 net new jobs. We have made investments to support and work with industries across the spectrum. When we came to the assistance of General Motors and Chrysler, that member and her party were against doing that. When we made investments in a range of other industries, including the forestry and mining sectors, that member and her party were against it.

There is no doubt that there is more to do. There is no doubt that as Ontario emerges from this downturn—and we are emerging from the downturn—we will build a better and stronger economy, including clean water technologies. She has made the case why we need the act. I only hope that she'll do what she says as opposed to saying one thing and doing another, which is her history and the history of her party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Some 350,000 women and men have lost good manufacturing or resource jobs since this government was elected a couple of years ago. Many more are worried about the future and their precious jobs. They see access to Ontario's natural resources and public money doled out to companies, but they don't see good jobs being created right here. When will the McGuinty government finally address this jobs crisis?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We began that two years ago. We began that when we invested in a range of industries, including the auto sector—400,000 jobs—which that member and her party voted against. We did that when we cut personal taxes and corporate taxes for businesses, which experts say will create 600,000 jobs and help the poorest in this province; that member and her party voted against it. We did that when we created the Green Energy Act, which will create 50,000 jobs in Ontario; that member and her party voted against it.

There's no doubt that there's more to do as Ontario comes out of this recession, but there's one thing we do know: The people of Ontario are the best, most skilled workforce around. We're going to continue to make those investments because Ontario is going to be bigger and better and stronger—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I would agree with the finance minister that we have the best skilled workers in all of the world. It's too bad they're all out of work.

Ontario's natural resources, our public assets, our tax dollars can actually be invested wisely to build our province and create good jobs here. But under this government, that is simply not happening. Whether it's Xstrata shipping resources across the border to Quebec for the manufacturing to happen there, whether it's General Electric shipping technology developed in Ontario to create jobs in Hungary or whether it's Vale Inco simply shutting Sudbury down, this government is not—is not—looking out for Ontarians who need good jobs.

When will we finally see a real strategy to create and protect good jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, there are 91,000 more jobs in Ontario than there were last May. We still have a ways to go to make up from the downturn of the US and world economies. There's more to do, and we'll continue to do that.

I'd remind her that, in fact, some 93% of Ontarians are working. Not everybody is unemployed. That being said, for those who are, we are going to continue to make the investments that we're making. We will continue through Employment Ontario, through Second Career and through our investments in a variety of industries to do the sorts of things that will help people get back to work as this economy grows and recovers.

The economy is growing again; it is going to recover. We'll continue to make the kinds of investments that governments ought to make in order to help sustain that new growth.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday in Sudbury, I joined 5,000 striking Vale Inco workers and their families. Like too many companies operating in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, Vale has no ties to our province and no concern for the hard-working people who call Ontario home. The McGuinty government's no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways are not a strategy and won't help people who need jobs to pay their bills.

When will this government finally clue in and deliver a real plan to get Ontarians back to work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, I think the people of Ontario see through her rhetoric. They recognize that we are in an extremely difficult and competitive world economy and that there are enormous challenges on all fronts.

All of us will continue to make the investments to build a better future for Ontario and build more jobs across a range of sectors, including the mining sector. We'll have more to say about that on Thursday. We have a great belief in the future of this province's economy, and we have the right policies to build employment, to build jobs and to grow this economy back to where it was before the world recession hit.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, you said that the budget won't have new taxes, but on the same day, Enbridge and Union Gas representatives told the general government committee that the McGuinty Liberals want to slap the new energy tax on home heating bills.

You've been found out about your secret back-door tax on hydro. Are the McGuinty Liberals going to tax home heating fuel, too?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member again comes to this House, just like yesterday when he came to the Legislature and said that a regulation wasn't on the registry. Obviously, he could not find it himself through his own computer. Now that his leader has a new website, I'm going to suggest that his leader perhaps give him directions as to how to get onto that website, because he may need them.

Getting back to the member's question: No, we have not made any decisions to move forward with any allocations with regard to the gas industries. We're always looking for ways to conserve. It's the best possible way for us to get the best value for consumers. We'll continue to work with all partners in the energy sector on ways to provide better conservation initiatives. But the answer is no.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, well, well. This wasn't the first time that Dalton McGuinty said something different than one of his ministers. It wasn't even the first time yesterday.

Minister Duguid twisted himself in knots, saying the back-door energy tax wasn't a tax before the Premier said in fact it is a tax. The energy minister said it was a one-year deal, but later the Premier said he's looking for ways to keep gouging Ontario seniors and families on their energy bills.

Enbridge and Union Gas said you're eyeing them next, that "there have been a number of meetings" and "in terms of actual costs, that hasn't been determined at this time."

How much more will Ontario seniors and families pay because of the Liberals' tax on home heating fuel?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact of the matter is—and if this member understood what conservation does—these initiatives will save consumers money. They will help us avoid having to make much—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member from Renfrew that he just asked a question. I can't hear the answer. Obviously, you can't either.

Hon. Brad Duguid: These initiatives will save consumers money. They help us avoid much more costly further investments in energy infrastructure and maintenance. They help us avoid having to make even more expansion of our green energy initiatives.

This is the most cost-effective way to handle our energy supply challenges. The member doesn't understand that. It doesn't come out of the blue. It was very much part of the Green Energy Act. If the member had read the act, he would have looked at section 26.1 and known that this was an initiative that this Legislature passed some time—

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

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, yesterday we heard from 24 deputants in committee hearings on Bill 242. Almost all of them said the same thing: They were happy with Charles Pascal's report and they were hoping they were going to get all of Pascal's recommendations implemented. They never dreamed they'd get something different, and now they're worried. Their worry is that when you pull out the four- and five-year-olds from child care providers, you remove an important source of revenue. It's the revenue that subsidizes care for infants and younger children. Without it, they will be crippled and many will not survive, and those that do will have to increase fees. What are you going to do to ensure that daycare providers remain viable?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that everyone in the House recognizes the importance of the legislative

process. We are a government that, when we introduce legislation, it then goes to committee. We very much value the input that we receive at the committee level. I think that our record demonstrates very clearly we listen to what is presented and there is an impact, and we have considered amendments.

The member has identified points that have been raised at committee; they have been raised with my office; they've been raised with my colleague, the minister responsible for children and youth. What I can say to this assembly this morning is that we are paying very close attention. We are absolutely committed to investing in our earliest learners. That is without question. We are taking a staged approach in terms of how this is going to—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, I'm glad you're listening—I really am—because this problem is not going away. There are going to be hearings today, and they're going to say the same thing. There will be hearings on Monday, and they will be saying the same thing. It's important that you are listening, because when you take the four- and five-year-olds out of those child care providers, it's going to hurt. When you take the preschool and after-school programs away from those child care providers, it's going to make it worse.

Are you, and when are you, going to provide stabilization funding that will allow schools to hold on to these providers as partners?

1100

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I would say is that when you have four- and five-year-olds in a full-day learning program in our school communities, that's good for students and that's good for their parents. That's what we've been hearing across Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean—and the comments from the member from Peterborough are not helpful.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We know the member from Nepean is not supportive of full-day learning.

I do want to note that I have a quote that says, "It's a good initiative and we support the initiative.... It is a public good, it's good for kids, it's good for mothers and fathers...." That came from Rosario Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina.

So I can say to the honourable member, who thinks this is a very good initiative, that we are listening very carefully to those who are—

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

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: This question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Today is Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park, and I'd like to

take this opportunity to ask about our province's latest mineral development opportunity. In our government's throne speech earlier this month, we heard that the Ring of Fire is part of the Open Ontario plan. There's a lot of excitement about the Ring of Fire in the north. It is being hailed as one of the most promising mineral developments in northern Ontario in perhaps a century. While there's a lot of excitement around this opportunity, people are wondering how communities surrounding the Ring of Fire feel about it. I understand that last week, the minister visited four communities that surround the Ring of Fire. Would he please tell the House about that visit?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question; I appreciate it. Indeed, last week I did have the opportunity to visit four First Nations communities in the Ring of Fire: Neskantaga, Eabametoong, Marten Falls and Webequie. While I was there, I met with chiefs, councillors, elders and members of the community, stressing our government's commitment to working with them as the Ring of Fire project moves forward. Certainly the visit was a very valuable experience. It gave me and my staff an opportunity to continue to strengthen our relationship with the chiefs and the councils in those communities.

One very important thing that came out of our visit was the removal of a blockade on two frozen airstrips, a blockade that Marten Falls and Webequie had put up in the last two months. The removal of the blockade was a very positive step forward.

My ministry will continue to work closely with the First Nations and the companies with interests in the area to strengthen our relationships and see the Ring of Fire become a success and a benefit for—

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, after your visit I read in several news articles that Marten Falls Chief Elijah Moonias said that a big reason for the blockade coming down was due to the visit that you and your officials made last week. This is very positive news and is proof of the government's ongoing commitment to work with First Nations communities surrounding the Ring of Fire.

However, I also read that the removal of the blockade could be temporary if First Nations communities do not see progress in their talks with government and industry over the course of the next six months.

Would the minister please tell the House how you and your ministry plan on working with these First Nations communities in the near future?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, when we see developments such as the Ring of Fire in the Far North, I believe it translates into hope and opportunity for those communities. Thus, it is incredibly important that we get it right and that it is managed correctly: done in a way that does address communities' environmental concerns and their need to be consulted, obviously, and provide good economic development opportunities. We now have a real opportunity to move forward.

Again, I want to assure you and the communities involved that my ministry will continue to work very, very closely with all of the communities affected as well as with industry. There are some tremendous partnerships being formed and we're seeing benefits arising already. At the prospectors and developers' convention, there was a signing between four First Nations, which again showed that that kind of co-operation and work can be done together. We're going to work very closely to see this happen.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also to the Acting Premier. A pattern has developed where the Premier and his cabinet ministers cannot seem to keep their stories straight. Premier McGuinty couldn't even get through announcing the Samsung deal before admitting that there won't be 16,000 jobs and that he gave away the store to get 1,400 full-time jobs. Later, Minister Duguid said that there might be as many as 4,400 full-time jobs. Did the energy minister make a rookie mistake, or was he just making things up, or was he admitting that the McGuinty Liberal sweetheart Samsung deal subsidized 3,000 jobs in Korea?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There is so much misinformation in that question I'm not sure where to start. The fact is, and the Premier said this time and time again, the Samsung initiative will bring 16,000 jobs to this province—16,000 jobs that you don't support; 16,000 workers that would not otherwise be working; 16,000 families that are going to benefit from our green energy initiatives. That is just the start, because the Green Energy Act overall will bring 50,000 jobs to this province over the next three years.

We're very proud of the initiative. It really does provide a real boost of creating a hub here in Ontario. This initiative puts Ontario on the map internationally. Ontario is now the place, the destination when it comes to green energy development in the world—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister is right. I can't keep track of his numbers because they change every day and job numbers never come true.

Even though unemployment is lower in South Korea than Ontario, Dalton McGuinty is sending jobs to a country that the OECD ranks as one of the world's most industrious and he's making Ontario families and businesses pay for the honour of growing Korea's economy. Each time McGuinty slaps a new tax on energy bills, he raises business costs and drives jobs out of Ontario—200,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs.

Because he only has aspirational plans, Dalton McGuinty ended up subsidizing foreign companies like Samsung and Ubisoft to bring jobs to Ontario. When will the McGuinty Liberals stop treating energy as a social

policy and start making energy an economic policy so they can create jobs instead of buying them?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've just been informed that that famous website of the Leader of the Opposition says that you would cancel that Samsung initiative; you would give away those 16,000 jobs. You talk about being committed to jobs and yet when you see jobs being created here you want to distinguish whether they're construction jobs or not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. They were doing well for a while. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're building the economy of the future. We're building the next generation of jobs in this province. We're not going back to the energy policies that they want us to go back to, and those are the energy policies that involve reliance on coal. We're well past there. We're building this new economy on the next generation of jobs, on the green economy. We're leading the world. There is interest from all over the world in the work that we're doing here in this province—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Last week, our community of Hamilton suffered another economic blow. Siemens announced they would be cutting 550 good jobs, jobs that put food on the table and pay the bills every month for those families. Based on what we know, the McGuinty government's negotiations with the company failed miserably. As Hamilton's only voice at the cabinet table, what did the minister know about these negotiations and when did she know?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind that you need to refer that to the appropriate minister.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Can I answer the first part?

I want to thank the member for my first question in the House coming from a Hamiltonian. It's not a question for the Ministry of Consumer Services, so in my supplementary I will send it to the Acting Premier, but let me just say that, as a Hamiltonian, I was disappointed in Siemens going to North Carolina. Absolutely, I was disappointed. But you know what? I'm very optimistic. Hamilton is a great city with the best skilled workforce and we will definitely get more jobs to Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: There must be an election coming.

Either the Minister of Consumer Affairs is representing Hamilton or she's not. It's important that she's on top of what her government is doing to protect jobs in our community. But it seems that the McGuinty government went into negotiations with Siemens without much of a

plan, and now 550 families are paying the price as \$26-an-hour jobs head to North Carolina. This is a serious Hamilton economic issue and the minister of Hamilton needs to account for her and her government's failure.

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How did the McGuinty government so badly bungle the Siemens negotiations?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: To the Acting Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Hamilton is lucky to have that member standing up for their interests. What a contrast. You have a member who speaks to a brighter future and progress for Hamilton versus a voice of the old ways, the old days and no jobs.

We were extremely disappointed that we lost the competition on that particular project. But I'd remind that member that he voted against putting the money in the budget to be there in the negotiation in the first place. He has done nothing—nothing—to help his community through these difficult times. He has done nothing to help this province. That member and our members from Hamilton have stood up—

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

INTERNET SECURITY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: What a knight you are; a white knight.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

Please continue.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Children today spend a lot of time on the Internet. It is incredibly important—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're sickening.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please watch the language that he uses within this chamber.

Please continue.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: As I was saying, my question is directed to the Minister of Education. Our children today spend a lot of time on the Internet, and it is incredibly important that they are protected from possible predators. While parents are the best people to teach and guide their children's online habits, teachers also play a vital role. Parents and teachers in my riding of York South–Weston and across the province understand the importance of working together to ensure that all our children are protected.

In the past, our government has dedicated resources to boards to educate our students about Internet safety, as well as for non-profit groups such as the Kids Internet Safety Alliance.

Minister, what is our government, and your ministry in particular, doing to protect children during their online activities?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: A very important question, because I think that the people of Ontario do want to understand how we are working in government to protect our young people. My ministry has been working very closely with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We have committed to a number of initiatives. We have the CyberCops initiative. It is particular software for grade 7 and 8 students and it deals with the issues of cybertheft, extortion and Internet luring. We also have the KINSA initiative, which is the Kids Internet Safety Alliance. They have received \$500,000 to provide a DVD to parents for students to talk to them and educate them about Internet safety issues. Just in the past fall, we committed \$750,000 to the Ontario physical education association as they have put resources together—

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Minister, there are many concerns with our children surfing online in ensuring that they are aware of the dangers posed by the Internet. The increasing importance of Internet safety resurfaced a couple of weeks ago after a province-wide OPP raid brought to light a child pornography ring. Shortly after this event, many media articles noted that Ontario's updated education curriculum would include an increased focus on Internet safety. This is great news for parents, as it will supplement the education that they provide to their children in their homes.

Minister, could you provide further information about the Internet safety updates to the curriculum?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We have heard from parents—who are very concerned about ensuring that we protect their children—about these very serious matters. Because we have just recently reviewed the Ontario curriculum in our schools, we have addressed Internet safety in that we have revised all curriculum documents in all subjects, in all grades, from grades 1 to 12. A review of our physical and health education curriculum in grades 1 to 8 has recently been completed, and as a result of that, we have put Internet safety in that curriculum. We've also revised the grades 9 to 12 curriculum. In September 2010, this curriculum will be implemented—

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

USE OF TASERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Two weeks ago, in your throne speech, policing stakeholders were very disappointed to learn that there was no mention of policing or community safety in the throne speech. Minister, do you agree that front-line police officers in Ontario should be trained and equipped with conductive energy weapons?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me say that I am very proud of our government's investments in policing across Ontario. I will compare our investments against the former government's investments at any time. I will compare our record of support for policing in the province of Ontario against their record any time. I will compare our record of investment with regard to police officers on the street against their record and their federal brothers' record at any time.

What I would ask of them is that they help us in convincing the federal government to make their police officer program a permanent one.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I guess you don't support it then. You didn't answer the question, so you obviously don't support it.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus believe that front-line officers should be trained and equipped with conductive energy weapons.

In the budget this week, your government will include \$25 million in severance packages for tax collectors who will have higher-paying jobs the very next day as HST tax collectors—certainly a very, very bad deal for Ontario taxpayers.

I don't have to remind you, Minister, that police officers are men and women who put their lives on the line each and every day of the week. Are you preparing to set aside funding in the budget to train and equip our front-line police officers with taser technology? A simple yes or no would do—a simple yes or no.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Just to clarify, the Tories put that clause in the agreement, just so that we all understand. All right. The Tories put it in. Let's make no mistake about that.

Listen, our government will continue to take a measured approach with regard to tasers. We brought our policing partners together. Very shortly, we'll be issuing those guidelines. It is a co-operative effort and a collaborative effort. We believe in partners in policing, not dictating to policing. That's what that government used to do. That's what that party still condones. We believe that it is very important to bring the partners to the table to make joint, shared decisions.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, I joined 5,000 women, men and children to support a fair deal for Vale Inco workers who have been on strike now for eight months. Vale Inco is making billions of dollars off of our natural resources and trying to squeeze more profits at the expense of Sudbury families. When will the McGuinty government get off the fence and stand in solidarity with Vale Inco workers and their families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. All of us here in this chamber and across

Ontario, but especially in the community of Sudbury, understand that this is a difficult and frustrating time.

We were pleased that, a few weeks ago, the parties did get together and have some talks. Now, those talks have been suspended. What I say to the parties is that they must roll up their sleeves and double their efforts. They need to put their differences aside. They have to come back to the table to resolve those differences. That is the only way we are going to get a stable, productive agreement to allow the community to move forward. This is where my efforts are; this is where the efforts of this government are. We are there to assist the parties, to help them come together—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say that I didn't see a single frustrated person; I saw a hell of a lot of devastated people in Sudbury the other day.

The Premier and his cabinet, including the minister from Sudbury, have been silent as thousands of workers have been languishing on the picket line. They've also refused to support the NDP's proposal, which would ban replacement workers in this province, and that would force Vale Inco into ending this strike. How much longer are the workers and their families going to have to wait before this government does the right thing and supports a ban on scabs in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member's rhetoric is what stops parties from coming together. It is Minister Bartolucci and the way that he acts in the community that brings the parties together, by working with them and understanding that the only way for us to move forward, for that community to move forward, is for all of them to put those differences aside, to get back to the table and to find where they have common ground. That's what we are doing at the Ministry of Labour by assisting with our mediation services. I do know they have a senior mediator who is working closely with the parties, but agreements reached at the bargaining table will be the ones that are stable, productive and the type of agreement that they need—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. In the minister's response to a previous question I raised in the House, he stated that increased visitors are a must for Ontario and for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I agree. There is a clear need for increased visitors to Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. In achieving this goal, we can stimulate our local economy and support Ontario's overall economy.

Efficiency, marketing and coordination are vital to bringing more visitors, but so are direct investments into the community.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, what steps will the minister take to support increased investments to Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock so that we can attract more visitors year in and year out?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for the question. Without a doubt, tourism is an economic driver of Ontario. Celebrate Ontario is a program that touches local communities across the province. Festivals and events in Ontario play an important role in generating \$23 billion for our economy. In Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock alone, through Celebrate Ontario, we are investing close to \$140,000 in eight festivals this year. Since 2007, we have invested close to over \$400,000.

I know that the honourable member is a strong advocate for local tourism. We remain committed to supporting communities like his area. They are at the heart of Ontario—

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: Such investments will make a significant difference. Festivals and events such as the Globus Theatre's summer season, Fiesta Buckhorn, 4th Line Theatre summer season in Millbrook, the CBCA national sheepdog championships and Wilberforce Agricultural Fair all play a vital role.

Providing such support will stimulate our local economy and help promote our communities. When we support these festivals and events, we strengthen their programs. It supports the community and the local organizers, and will increase visitors. Strengthening these festivals and events also provides more opportunities for growth and long-term sustainability with regard to funding.

To the minister: What are you doing to support these festivals and events so that they remain viable and attract more visitors to Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock now and well into the future?

Hon. Michael Chan: When we strengthen these festivals and events, they are certainly opportunities for growth. Our support does just that: It provides opportunities, and that's why we remain committed to supporting festivals and events.

Our commitment is clear: Since 2003, our government has invested more than \$140 million through more than 2,800 grants. This year's investment of almost \$12 million in Celebrate Ontario will support hundreds of festivals and events across the province.

Whether it's through Celebrate Ontario or the tourism event marketing partnership program, our support will continue. We know that supporting our festivals and events will help our communities and our economy moving forward.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, recently you

received and rejected a growth plan from the region of Durham. This plan was prepared after more than two years of consultation with citizens, experts and stakeholders within Durham. This plan has been endorsed by Durham region's council.

Minister, why do you think that politicians and bureaucrats at Queen's Park are better qualified to plan for Durham than their duly elected representatives locally?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You always have to start by saying, I want—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can't hear from the noise coming from the member from—where?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Lanark.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Lanark is interjecting because what he may be concerned about, the member for Lanark, is that when the gentleman behind him, my good friend Bill Murdoch, suggested the boundaries be changed—in other words, a separate Toronto and a separate rest of the province—he forgot to say that the government that did the most to hurt rural Ontario was the government that took away 27 seats from this Legislature. The impact of that on rural Ontario was so bad that the people of rural Ontario should not forget which government took away all of their power.

I was going to answer the question—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: That answer is simply shameful.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Unacceptable.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's unacceptable when you're so evasive on such an important issue to Durham.

Minister, it's hard to believe that a government facing a \$25-billion deficit and a \$3-billion tax increase is in any position to give advice to elected representatives in Durham. But let's set aside your government's Big Brother tactics for a moment.

It's my understanding that Durham region's growth plan is projected to increase by 25,000 more jobs in Durham. Now, the issue is, Minister, that your government is rejecting Durham's growth plan because the McGuinty government wants to put those jobs somewhere else.

Minister, is it fair that your government picks winners and losers? Or do you think it's fair of the government to stifle Durham region's job plan and investment in Durham?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member should know that all of the consultation took place, first of all, when there was the development of the Places to Grow Act in the province of Ontario. That was to affect the greater Golden Horseshoe. All the plans that we look at across the province of Ontario, as they are submitted for consideration, take into account the Places to Grow document.

Instead of having the kind of urban sprawl that your government permitted, where you paved over all kinds of

farmland and paved over all kinds of environmentally sensitive areas, our government looked at all aspects of it and tried to ensure that—you were transportation critic, so you know how important it is to concentrate population instead of allowing that sprawl. Our government is ending that urban sprawl—

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

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health. Christopher Pelletier must travel 350 kilometres to see medical specialists in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. Each trip to see a medical specialist is very expensive to him. He applies for and receives northern health travel grant assistance, but it takes more than 10 weeks for the northern health travel grant system to respond. In fact, it takes so long that, in the last six months, he has had to cancel four medical specialist appointments because the northern health travel grant system doesn't keep up with the cost of these trips.

My question is this: Does the minister think it is appropriate that residents of northern Ontario are forced to cancel medical specialist appointments because the northern health travel grant office doesn't keep up with the—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. This is an issue that has not been brought to my attention before, and it is one that I will most definitely look into. If the member opposite would share the details with me, I would be more than happy to do it.

I think access to care for people who live across this province, in different parts of this magnificent province, is an issue that we really are starting to focus some attention on. We've got the northern and rural health panel that is very close to releasing its draft report that will then trigger broader consultations. We really do need to get this right. We have made tremendous advancements in health care, and we need to make sure that excellent health care is available to people across Ontario, regardless of where they live in this province.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Minister, you should have Mr. Pelletier's letter in your office. He sent it to your office on March 13. But he's not alone. There are literally dozens and dozens of families who are being forced to cancel medical specialist appointments in places like Thunder Bay or Winnipeg because when they call the northern health travel grant office, the office says, "No, we're not even going to deal with your application until after 10 weeks." This puts people in a very difficult position. In Mr. Pelletier's case, his physician has said, "You need to have surgery." But he can't afford to go to Winnipeg to have surgery because

he has three travel grants that haven't been paid, and he doesn't have the money.

I ask the question again: Do you think people in northern Ontario should have to sacrifice their health because the northern health travel grant office is so slow to respond?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I do thank the member for bringing this to my attention. It is something that I suspect people in my office are already looking into. I will do my best to address the issue that he has raised with this particular constituent.

I think the member opposite does bring to light an issue that is one we do need to do some work on. In fact, we are focusing attention on that very issue. The northern health travel grant enhancements project is on track. Their goal is to reduce application processing times and further reduce the claims processing time. It is a challenge for us. We're working on it, and I will report back to the member as we make progress on this.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, broadband Internet access is viewed today as essential infrastructure for both our social and economic well-being. While urban residents have had access to powerful broadband connections for years, many residents in our remote and rural areas have not realized the same benefit. Given the importance of being connected in this day and age, access to broadband infrastructure should be available to as many Ontarians as possible, including our rural businesses and residents.

In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, local municipalities are looking to attract new businesses. Services such as access to fast Internet connections are integral to companies deciding to locate in the area.

Could the minister inform this House about the steps our government has taken to ensure rural access to broadband infrastructure?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do want to thank the member for the question. I want to be very succinct in my answer. There have been significant investments made by the McGuinty government in the information highway. Not only have we made significant investments in remote and rural communities on our actual highways, but we recognize that the information highway brings more industry and creates jobs. The investments have been significant: \$27 million for 47 broadband projects, including \$520,000 to the county of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; \$849,000 to South Glengarry township; \$55 million to fund a regional broadband proposal from the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus; and \$32.75 million under the Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians program to support projects across rural and northern Ontario.

The McGuinty government gets it. We recognize that these investments in rural Ontario will remain—that Ontario rural communities are strong. We will—

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

PRESENTATION OF THRONE SPEECH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Our fundamental abilities as elected members of this Legislature and opposition are guided by the very rules of this Legislature. Each and every member here is elected to represent the constituency that has given us the privilege and honour to best represent it. This representation is founded through our ability to stand in our place and vote on behalf of our constituents.

On December 16, 2004, the member from Oak Ridges stood on a point of order, and, as it relates to that point, I quote Speaker Curling's ruling where he specifically states, "whether the announcement goes further and reflects adversely on the parliamentary process," as stated on February 22, 2005.

A tradition was upheld during a previous throne speech when the then-minister from Leeds–Grenville stepped aside during a review of what I see as a similar statement.

To add to that, my point of order reflects on page 12 of the throne speech, where it specifically states, "It will introduce legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care."

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to rule if the parliamentary process has been circumvented as a result of the statement found on page 9 of the throne speech, where it specifically states, "That's why, starting this fall, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will begin at schools across our province." Bill 242, dealing with all-day kindergarten, is still before the Legislature.

The difficulty that we find here is that it appears to be a fait accompli—that the decision has been made for each and every one of us elected to vote on behalf of our constituents. Speaker, I would ask for your review.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for his point of order. Bearing in mind that he has made references to previous rulings, and I do not have the luxury of having the throne speech and those specific pages that he made reference to, I will reserve judgment on that ruling.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On another point of order, Speaker: I rise on a point of order under standing order 23, specifically subsections (h) and (i). Today, during question period, the Acting Premier's replies to questions from the Leader of the Opposition alleged as to what the leader and the Ontario PC caucus would do if we formed the next government. It is somewhat ironic—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is somewhat ironic, given the Acting Premier said with one breath that we have no plan, but impugned in another our plans if we are elected. With all his sucking and blowing, he stepped outside the decorum of the House, alleging that we will cut health care and close hospitals. In point of fact, Tim Hudak, our

leader, is on record as saying that a PC government will make no cuts to health. Elsewhere, he has said—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Can you get to the point that you're trying to make?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Under those rules, he's making allegations against the Leader of the Opposition as to what he would do, should he be elected government. The Leader of the Opposition has said no such thing. That both imputes motives under subsection (i) and makes allegations against him under subsection (h). I believe that the Speaker should rule—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I endeavour as much as possible to listen very closely during question period. It is difficult at times with comments that are made, but I did not hear anything that was imputing any allegation directed against a member.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Peter Kormos: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I didn't want to be left out, Speaker.

A point of order is not debate. One understands that in the cut and thrust of debate, there may be heckling and response—at times, loud and vociferous heckling and response. A point of order is a very valuable tool that every member of this assembly has. With respect, it seems to me that it is out of order for there to be the sort of heckling that we just witnessed. During the course of a point of order, whether it's successful or not, if any of us are going to enjoy that privilege of raising points of order, then we ought to respect other members' privilege and right to raise those same points of order.

I suggest to you, sir, that it was out of order for members to intervene during the course of a point of order. If they've got a point of order, stand up and raise one. Otherwise, sit down and listen.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I do thank the honourable member for his point. His point is very well taken, and I think it applies to much more than just during a point of order.

At times, I find that it's extremely difficult to hear in this chamber. In this chamber we have many guests who come and visit, and if the members would like, I would be very happy to share many of the e-mails that I do receive from what I like to call the armchair speakers, who are at home watching, and those individuals who have come to this chamber.

I would love to see more courtesy given at all times within this chamber, to be respectful of the points of view of members. I don't want to continue to rise during question period and interrupt the flow of the proceedings; I would like to see the question period flow. So I do thank the honourable member from Welland for his comment. I would just ask all members to be conscious of what he said. As much as possible, we do need to be courteous with one another, recognizing the fact, as in a

ruling that I've made previously, that it is the cut and thrust of this environment in which we work, but we all do need to have respect for one another's opinions. I thank the honourable members.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Speaker's gallery a good friend of mine, Larry Sherk. For anybody who is interested in Canadian beer memorabilia, Larry is the premier collector of the Canadian brewing industry and the memorabilia associated with it. Welcome, Larry.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on a motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John
Albanese, Laura	Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol
Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Duncan, Dwight	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Naqvi, Yasir
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Greg
Chiarelli, Robert	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Kormos, Peter	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 31.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is therefore resolved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like the members to join me in welcoming Chris Hodgson, who represented Victoria-Haliburton in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and Victoria-Haliburton-Brock in the 37th Parliament, in the east gallery. Welcome back to the Legislature, Chris.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL AUXILIARIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. John O'Toole: The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario. These members volunteered over four million hours and raised \$50 million for their health care facilities last year.

The Association of Hospital Volunteers in Bowmanville marked the centennial on February 16 with a free coffee and/or tea at their kiosk at the hospital. Jill Haskins, director of resources for the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, is a long-time member of the Bowmanville Hospital Association. The Bowmanville president is Joanne Crookshank. I commend them for their volunteer work.

In Port Perry, the auxiliary hosted the recent Polar Plunge on January 9 as the auxiliary fundraiser for the year. Ruth Spearing is president of the auxiliary in Port Perry.

In Uxbridge, the community is looking forward to the Uxbridge half-marathon on April 25, which supports their auxiliary. The auxiliary president at Uxbridge Cottage Hospital is Mary Kerber.

Whether they are actively fundraising or working behind the scenes, hospital volunteers bring added comfort, hope and encouragement. Congratulations to all of the hospital auxiliary associations in Ontario on your centenary.

I might add my disappointment. When I, in 2009, asked one of the ministers of McGuinty's government to extend a greeting or extend some small token to allow them to celebrate, this was denied. I commend those volunteers who make our hospitals a better place for the victims, or the patients, in their care.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise today to address the daycare crisis that is building in this province.

Recently, I received a letter from the chair of the board of Boulton Avenue Child Care in my riding. Sarah Johnson chairs an organization that has a long history in the Queen-Broadview area and provides high-quality child care to many children. She writes:

"As chair of the board of Boulton Avenue Child Care and the parent of a child in daycare, I was really concerned to learn that thousands of child care subsidies and the stability of our entire child care system is at risk if the Ontario government does not include funding for child care in its next budget. Cuts to child care subsidies could begin as soon as this July. This hits low-income parents hardest, who can't look for work without affordable, secure child care for their children. Our daycare, Boulton, has many such parents, so it would affect not only parents but the entire daycare itself."

The child care issue must be addressed in this budget, not only the immediate funding crisis but the potential dislocation of daycare centres from the piecemeal implementation of full-day kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten is an initiative that parents want. They want it done with a view to preventing upheaval during its implementation. I call on the government to listen to parents around this province and make sure that daycare is protected, not threatened.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to commend the efforts of the London Youth Council and the Middlesex-London Health Unit for their organization of Through a Youth's Eyes, a photo competition for youth aged 13 to 25.

This competition is unique in the fact that it is primarily organized and judged by youth. It also has important social messages that the youth council and the Middlesex-London Health Unit want to relay.

All submissions must respond to a particular social issue, whether it's about healthy eating, community safety and awareness, or recycling. With these messages, the idea is that youth can begin having an open discussion about these issues and how important they are to their own well-being and of course the broader public. These discussions will, hopefully, lead to positive change and actions that will change these youths' lifestyles.

It is truly commendable and noteworthy, the efforts of the youth council and the Middlesex-London Health

Unit, to have those engagements, artistically and actively engaging all the youth in our community.

I want to congratulate them for their hard work and commitment to making a difference in the lives of youth in the London-Middlesex community.

EARTH HOUR

Mr. Toby Barrett: I stand to remind government members, as I have for the past three years, to encourage those throughout Ontario to join this Saturday night's Earth Hour. It's an international effort for energy reduction.

Earth Hour is now in its fourth year and calls on countries, provinces, cities and residents to take a very simple step: Turn out the lights this Saturday between 8:30 and 9:30. Last year, more than 4,000 cities in 87 countries went dark. In Ontario, demand was reduced by more than 6%; that's 920 megawatts.

Why is a government prone to chest-beating on environmental headlines doing such a poor job of letting Ontarians know of government support for this worldwide initiative? Last year, all we got was a three-line news release on the Ministry of the Environment website. This year, check the website: There's not even that. There's no mention. We're now four days ahead of Earth Hour, and there's nothing on the website. I really wonder, what are people to think about this?

Perhaps government feels the loss of close to 300,000 manufacturing jobs under its watch was contribution enough to cut electricity use. Maybe the same electronic wizards that erased and then replaced reference to the \$53-million electricity tax can quickly post an Earth Hour statement.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, COUNCIL 1447

Mr. Bill Mauro: In January of this year, I had the great pleasure of attending the 100th anniversary of the Knights of Columbus, Council 1447, in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I want to congratulate the anniversary committee chair, Bill Vass, and his members for a great event.

Current officers of Fort William Council 1447 include grand knight Jim Dickson; deputy grand knight Norm Shonosky; chancellor Jim Baker; financial secretary Peter Sabourin; recorder Romano Taddeo; warden George Romick; treasurer Bill Vass; lecturer Wayne Murphy; trustees Alex Kayzer, Mike Posmituk and Roger Fournier; advocate Louis Romito; inside guard Maurice Pelletier; outside guard Larry Joy; and chaplain Father Francis Blazek and co-chaplain Father Ted Kennedy.

Some of my favourite events are with organizations that offer incredible service through volunteerism to their communities. They help hold us together—they're the glue of our communities. They are, to a large degree, responsible for our social fabric.

Thunder Bay has a tremendous record of volunteerism, none greater than the Knights of Columbus 1447. They help us reach our potential as communities.

Many members have been noteworthy for their contributions, including Louis Salini, who held the positions of grand knight of Council 1447, district deputy, Ontario state warden, Ontario state deputy and vice supreme master in the fourth degree.

I congratulate Council 1447 on their 100th anniversary of volunteerism in our community, and I wish them many more years of charity, unity and fraternity.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm starting to hear concerns from more and more constituents about our local York region community care access centre. Seniors are being cut off home care, services they have received for years, in some cases. One woman has had her home care reduced from levels she has received for almost 20 years.

My constituents want to know, is the government underfunding the CCAC? Or is there a problem with the local agency?

1510

Home care helps seniors stay in their own homes, and I thought this was the centrepiece of something the government wanted to do as part of the aging-in-place strategy. This will not work if the government refuses to provide the funding needed. We know that the government underfunds health care in the 905. They admitted this in the throne speech when they announced a new funding system for health. I call on the Minister of Health to review spending and funding at the York region CCAC, and make sure my constituents have the home care services they deserve so they can stay in their own homes.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS DISTINCTIONS POUR SERVICES BÉNÉVOLES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I recently had the pleasure of hosting a Celebration 2010 ceremony honouring 25 volunteers from my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Celebration 2010 is an award program developed by former Minister Jim Watson to honour our communities' sports and recreation volunteers. These are people who spend thousands of hours helping our beloved athletes achieve their goals. These awards turned the spotlight on them by giving them the recognition they deserve.

Dans une communauté nous comptons toujours plusieurs bénévoles dans le domaine des sports. Ce sont des gens qui donnent de leur temps et leur expertise afin d'aider et d'encourager nos athlètes à réaliser leurs rêves de pratiquer un sport qui les passionne. Célébration 2010 nous permet de reconnaître et d'honorer les héros méconnus de notre communauté dans le domaine sportif et récréatif.

Once again, many thanks to our volunteers for the work they are doing in developing Canada's future Olympic athletes.

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: In my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, I've highlighted Kitchener Oktoberfest, I've highlighted the Wellesley apple butter festival, I've highlighted Wilmot NASCAR festival and today I have the pleasure of highlighting the Woolwich Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. Yes, this festival happens this Saturday, March 27, and it is the 46th annual Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. On February 26 we tapped the tree at George Martin's farm and Robert Richmond of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association was there with us. We received great coverage by Gail Martin in the Elmira Independent. She covered the tapping, and she continues to cover the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. A big thank you to Gail and all of her local coverage in the Elmira Independent.

I also want to thank Cheryl Peterson, who is the chair of this year's festival, all of her committee members and her many, many volunteers who make this a possibility and reality for our community. I also want to thank the Woolwich Observer and the editor, Steve Kannon, who continue their fantastic work of ongoing coverage of the maple syrup festival and of all of the local issues in Woolwich township; and great recent coverage by Katie Edmonds, who says, on the front of the Observer, that there are two things to remember when you come to the festival on Saturday: "Plan ahead, and be hungry!"

I invite everyone in Ontario to come to the 46th annual Elmira Maple Syrup Festival on Saturday.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: Our government understands how important it is to stimulate business investment, create new jobs and help Ontarians keep their hard-earned money. This is why our government has modernized Ontario's tax system.

Unfortunately, the members of the opposition have put forward a great deal of myths and fictions about these reforms, ignoring some of the very important benefits these reforms hold for Ontarians. For example, our government has implemented the largest tax cut in Ontario's history. Starting this past January 1, we cut taxes for 93% of Ontarians and removed 90,000 low-income earners from the tax roll altogether.

What's more, experts believe that having a single sales tax will create almost 600,000 new jobs in our great province, and a harmonized sales tax was shown to stimulate business investment by 12% in the maritime provinces.

Poverty groups and business groups have both voiced their support for these tax reforms and economists on both the left and the right are supporting them as well. But of course, most of the Conservative members have

also voiced their support for the HST because they know that these are the right tax reforms at the right time for our province.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Brownell assumes ballot item number 14 and Mr. Kwinter assumes ballot item 66; and Mr. Barrett assumes ballot item number 10 and Mr. Yakubski assumes ballot item number 16.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills gives notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning transfer of staff from the Ontario Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning Durham region's growth plan. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DURHAM REGION CLASSIC MUSTANG CLUB ACT, 2010

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr30, An Act to revive the Durham Region Classic Mustang Club.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank Mr. Frank Fielding of Port Perry in Durham region for all of his hard work in reviving this bill and in fact reviving the Durham Region Classic Mustang Club.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

DEEPA GAS LIMITED ACT, 2010

Ms. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Deepa Gas Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41 IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE LIEU 41 D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 9, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 9, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

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

First reading agreed to.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: You don't need it, Garfield.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a bill that keeps on giving, Aileen.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT (NOISE REMEDICATION), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN (RÉDUCTION DU BRUIT)

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 10, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to noise remediation / Projet de loi 10, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun en ce qui concerne la réduction du bruit.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. David Caplan: This bill amends the Public Transportation Highway Improvement Act to require that the Minister of Transportation assess noise levels on highways after construction, extension or alteration.

1520

In the case where the noise level exceeds the acceptable level as established by the ministry by five decibels or more, the minister is obliged to take all necessary steps to reduce noise to an acceptable level within three years. The bill also requires the minister to establish and publish standards for acceptable noise levels for the operation of highways.

Over the years, residents in my community have worked hard to remediate noise increases in Don Valley East that have resulted from road repairs and other work on Highways 401 and 404 and the Don Valley Parkway. All of these intersect at the heart of Don Valley East.

With this bill, I hope to complement their extensive work and lobbying and put an end to the frustration caused by noise levels on highways.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of bills? The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce members of paramedics teams across Ontario from CUPE and OPSEU, and behind them the Police Association of Ontario and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association as well, who helped with this bill. Thank you all, gentlemen and women.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (POST TRAUMATIC
STRESS DISORDER), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(TROUBLE DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post traumatic stress disorder / *Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail relativement au trouble de stress post-traumatique.*

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. Cheri DiNovo: This bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to provide that a worker who sustains mental stress arising out of and in the course of his or her employment is entitled to benefits under the insurance plan. Post-traumatic stress disorder should be presumed as being caused by work for all front-line workers.

BRITISH HOME CHILD
DAY ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR
DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

Mr. Brownell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day / *Projet de loi 12, Loi proclamant le Jour des petits immigrants britanniques.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: This bill will proclaim September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day. It will set aside a day to recognize and honour the contributions made to the province of Ontario by the more than 100,000 British home children from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They came to Canada and Ontario from homes for the orphaned and destitute to work as domestics and farm labourers in a new land with fresh air and green spaces. They left us wonderful legacies, and this bill will honour those individuals.

SUSTAINABLE WATER
AND WASTE WATER
SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
AND MAINTENANCE ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA VIABILITÉ
ET L'AMÉLIORATION DES RÉSEAUX
D'APPROVISIONNEMENT EN EAU
ET D'EAUX USÉES

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to sustain and encourage improvement in Ontario's water and waste water services and to establish the Ontario Water Board / *Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à assurer la viabilité des services d'approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées de l'Ontario et à favoriser leur amélioration et créant la Commission des eaux de l'Ontario.*

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. David Caplan: Clean, safe drinking water ensures Ontario is strong, healthy and prosperous. This bill evolves from Justice Dennis O'Connor's recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry and from the recommendations of the water strategy expert panel. The bill does a number of things. It ensures the public ownership of water and waste water systems, it promotes financial stability, it improves transparency in the provision of water and waste water services to the public, and it creates an independent economic regulator with the expertise and authority to administer this act. This act brings into broad daylight the often-hidden water and waste water services that we all use.

Well-maintained and well-functioning water and waste water systems underpin our very quality of life. This legislation will help Ontarians enjoy high standards of public water services for generations to come.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am excited to be here today to talk about our government's student success programs and how they have helped over 52,500 additional students achieve their high school diploma over the last five years.

Thanks to Ontario's hard-working educators using our innovative programs, we have seen a steady increase in the number of students graduating from high school. When the McGuinty government took office in 2003, only 68% of Ontario's students were graduating from high school. We made a commitment to raising the graduation rate, and we are doing so. I'm very pleased to announce today that the rate was 79% for the 2008-09 school year. This is a tremendous result. It represents an increase of 11 percentage points since 2003. This means that an additional 16,500 students graduated last year alone compared to 2003-04.

C'est un fait établi que les élèves n'étudient pas tous au même rythme et ne partagent pas tous les mêmes intérêts. Nous en sommes conscients et le comprenons bien.

That's why we are allowing students to explore different pathways and programs as they progress through their secondary education. All Ontario students deserve the high-quality learning opportunities that they need to reach graduation. We have launched programs like the specialist high skills majors program, dual credits and expanded co-op. They create a more engaging learning environment for students and better prepare them to pursue future opportunities beyond high school. They also allow students to customize their high school experience to match their strengths, interests and career goals.

We've also funded 1,900 additional secondary school teachers to help struggling students in every high school. In addition, we've added more teachers and provided more support to our elementary schools so every student establishes a solid foundation in reading, writing and math that they can build on going forward.

All of this is contributing to our ultimate goal. More students today are succeeding and earning their diplomas.

Rising graduation rates and higher test scores are a testament to the hard work of our educators. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all educators and all of the staff in Ontario schools and our school boards. Thank you for your passion, commitment and hard work.

Applause.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: They do a great job. They deserve that.

Our government knows that the positive results that have been happening in our schools across this province would not be possible without them, so we want to thank

them for enriching the lives of our future generation with the work that they do so well every day.

Education is the foundation of economic success, and that's why higher graduation rates are part of the province's new Open Ontario plan, which is about creating jobs and opportunities for more Ontarians and building a well-educated workforce. The future prosperity of Ontario depends on the strength of our students. With more than 715,000 high school students in Ontario in almost 900 schools, it is imperative that we provide all students with more learning opportunities to help them graduate, to help them reach their future aspirations and become well-equipped to take on life's challenges. Together, we will make Ontario a classroom for the world.

1530

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to advise members that this is the 15th annual Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. Meet the Miners is a prime opportunity to bring together representatives of the mining industry and government to reaffirm the importance of dialogue and to foster mutual understanding.

We are hosting a delegation from the Ontario Mining Association, including President Chris Hodgson and the chair of the board, George Flumerfelt. The OMA is conducting several activities in our legislative buildings today, including a meeting of its board of directors. As co-host of Meet the Miners Day, I look forward to seeing all our legislative colleagues at this evening's social, which takes place in the legislative dining room from 5:30 to 7 p.m. tonight.

Let me also take this opportunity to update the members of the Legislature about Ontario's mineral development industry as well as our ministry's initiative to modernize the Mining Act. One thing we know for sure is that mining is a major force in Ontario's economy. Since 2003, Ontario has been Canada's leading jurisdiction for mineral exploration and active mining claims have reached record levels.

For several years, Ontario has been among the top 10 jurisdictions globally in terms of exploration expenditures, and Ontario's share of Canada's expenditures is forecast to be 28% in 2010. We cannot lose sight of the fact that mining in Ontario is a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business. Yes, indeed, there's no doubt the global economic downturn created huge challenges, but signs of recovery are clearly evident.

Let me give you some examples.

We are very excited about the fact that two new gold mines opened in Ontario last year. That's certainly good news for jobs and for economic development.

We also joined a very select group this last year, that of diamond producer. Thanks to this government's involvement with the project, we have ensured the creation

of value-added diamond jobs in Ontario through the province's first cutting and polishing facility.

We also helped to establish Canada's first diamond bourse, which was another great achievement.

We've all been hearing a great deal about the Ring of Fire. We are very excited about that. It is part of our government's Open Ontario plan, and this opportunity will help us to build a stronger economy and create jobs. The Ring of Fire is one of Ontario's most promising development opportunities in about a century and is North America's only world-class chromite deposit discovery. It's important that we do this right, we manage it well and we make sure that all the proper things are put in place, but we could not help but be very excited about this, and it's wonderful that it's part of the Open Ontario plan.

Those are just a couple of the success stories. We could go on even more. The important thing to note is that Ontario is continuing to work with the mineral sector to ensure that mining remains prosperous, which in turn strengthens our provincial economy.

As you know, my ministry has taken bold steps to modernize Ontario's Mining Act. During the last 18 months, we have worked with a wide variety of people and organizations to develop amendments to the act, and those efforts continue as we focus on development of the regulations. We are currently conducting a new phase of consultations to help us develop regulations and policies for this innovative new piece of legislation. To accomplish this, we have produced a workbook to help focus those discussions. Consultations centred on a workbook were launched earlier this year, and they will continue until June.

Again, in terms of our representatives who are here today, we are very grateful for their involvement in these discussions on the regulations. Sessions are being held to gather feedback from aboriginal communities, industry representatives and stakeholders, as well as other non-governmental organizations. May I also say that interested members of the public are encouraged to provide their comments through the Environmental Registry or the EBR until April 30.

Certainly, my ministry continues to work very hard to secure Ontario's place as a premier investment destination for mineral development.

In conclusion, once again, a warm welcome to all the industry leaders at Queen's Park, including those who are here in the visitors' gallery. I look forward to speaking with many of them throughout the day. I again welcome you all to the reception this evening at 5:30 in the legislative dining room.

Mining is a great economic force in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to respond to the minister's

statement today regarding the high school graduation rate in the province of Ontario.

I think I need to begin, as a former high school teacher and Minister of Education, in congratulating our students for the hard work they have undertaken in order to achieve success. We applaud them.

Secondly, I want to also recognize the teachers. I do believe the job of a teacher has become more difficult over the years since I was in the classroom. Certainly, these students were helped in achieving success by the outstanding teachers, principals, volunteers, and also parents who supported them. I don't think we can ever forget the role of the parent in supporting their child. So we congratulate those people as well.

We know that students at risk are a group of young people that we've had to pay particular attention to in recent years. They're the ones who really need the additional programming, the additional support in order to help them achieve their full potential. Research has always told us that if we can identify these students early and put in the appropriate supports and provide the remediation, then they will achieve success.

Past governments—Bill Davis was one of the Premiers in this province who did all he could for children, and all the other governments as well—have always worked hard to recognize the unique needs of students to help them. When I was minister we focused on the learning opportunities grant to help students. We provided them with remedial reading, literacy, math, summer school. We recognized that you've got to do more in order to help those students and support them to achieve the best that they can be.

I'm glad that students are achieving success and I hope that the government will continue to work with them to support those young people. I hope that we will always keep in mind that parents want a curriculum that is challenging and specific, and that we need to help students be the best that they can be.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to welcome the miners here today and the Ontario Mining Association and congratulate them on Meet the Miners Day.

I think it's also important that a government speak clearly and honestly to its citizens and stakeholders. Today the mining association is here, and I think it's crucial that the minister come forward and explain the contradictory statements about mining.

During the throne speech we heard that the Ring of Fire was going to add tremendous wealth and prosperity to the north. But then the minister went up north and told people not to get too excited. So what is it? Should people be excited or should they not be excited about this Ring of Fire?

The Premier and the minister have said that the Ring of Fire is going to be key to their five-year plan, but then ministry staff have said the Ring of Fire will not be

operational for at least five, maybe 10, years. That's what they said in the media two weeks ago. So which is it? Is the Ring of Fire key or is it not part of the plan at all?

The Premier and the minister have said the Ring of Fire is going to be a huge part of the economy. But then, at the same time, before this House, we have Bill 191, which will cut off all development to a quarter-million square kilometres of land in northern Ontario above the 51st parallel. There is no way of knowing how many Rings of Fire will never be found under Bill 191. There is no way of knowing what resources and wealth are up there. We don't know how many are going to be frittered away. So what is it, Minister? Will we develop or will we squander? Will we have prosperity or poverty? Part of the plan or no plan at all? Raising expectations or telling people the truth?

I'm not going to ask the minister to explain all these contradictions because I know he can't, but I will ask for one simple commitment to the miners who are here today. Minister, will you commit to the OMA and to the people of northern Ontario that no mineral development will be hindered or stopped by Bill 191? Let's be clear and honest with all the miners and the people of the north: Is northern Ontario open or is it closed?

1540

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus, I want to welcome those from the mining industry who have travelled from afar—from all the way up in Attawapiskat to mines down in the Windsor area—here to Queen's Park today.

Let's understand that mining is important not just to northern Ontario, but to all of this province when it comes to the wealth that it generates. It's not just about the ore that's taken out of the ground, but it's about all of the activities that happen thereafter when it comes to adding value to those products that are sold not just as commodities but as finished products across the world—and the service industry that services the mining industry primarily in northern Ontario is here in the south. So when we have a strong mining industry that's doing well, it is not just good for northern Ontario, but it's good for all of this province.

I want to say up front that I take great exception to what this government is doing around mining. We have changed the Mining Act, and we're now about to do what's called the Far North planning act. Is it any easier today for De Beers, for whoever the mining company might be, to get access to the land to be able to determine if there is a mine there, which is a very expensive process? And number two, if you do find something, what are the rules of engagement when it comes to bringing that particular mining property into production? Are we any closer today to dealing with the issues of revenue-sharing and the issue of land use planning for First Nations? I say no. We missed a golden opportunity with changes to the Mining Act that could have given some certainty to the mining industry.

I say here publicly that I don't believe it's the job of the mining companies to do what the government should be doing when it comes to dealing with what the rules of engagement are regarding how you deal with First Nations and making sure that they're made whole when it comes to the opportunity for employment and the opportunity for investment on their parts and the ability to participate economically in those projects. I think the government has to show leadership, and quite frankly, I believe we've missed the boat on this one and we're still no further.

Ring of Fire: great idea. We know there's lots of potential up in that part of the province. But are we actually going to be able to bring those projects on stream? If I speak to Chief Elijah Moonias or to any of the First Nations, they want mining to happen in those communities in that area. But we still don't have the rules by which it's going to happen, and unfortunately, if we don't have the rules it makes it much more difficult for the mining sector to go in and do what it has to do. Much of the money that we would like to see in exploration is not being spent here but is being spent in Quebec and other places.

So I say on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, there's lots of work yet to be done in mining. If I had more time, I'd talk about Xstrata and Vale Inco, but that'll be for another debate.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In response to the Minister of Education's declarations about graduation rates, I can only say that the Liberals are fixated with one thing. They are obsessed with numbers, even when these numbers do not demonstrate real learning or the acquisition of relevant skill sets on the part of students.

It is very troubling that OSSTF still finds it necessary to differentiate real from artificial success. Teachers all over the province are finding themselves pressured to improve the government's statistical performance by reducing the number of failing grades, whether student achievement warrants it or not.

It is discouraging that the OSSTF work group on credit integrity finds it necessary to demand, "All marks, grades, and credits shall be true and accurate indicators of student achievement." Shouldn't this be a given? Why does OSSTF have to put into writing, "The subject teacher shall have the right and responsibility to give a failing grade, including zero, to a student when warranted"? If we have to formally say, "The subject teacher shall be consulted when school administrators are considering a mark change for a student," then we have a problem.

Who decided that late assignments and absenteeism could not be considered when measuring student success, and what world do they live in?

When Ontario secondary students hand in assignments late, miss tests or plagiarize assignments, teachers are not permitted to let it affect the grade. This McGuinty gov-

ernment policy has growing numbers of parents, teachers, university professors and employers questioning the integrity of the education system.

The government should move to maintain confidence in the system and promote a sense of responsibility in our students by allowing teachers to establish and enforce reasonable deadlines and performance expectations for our students.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have a petition here from several hundred people in the region of Waterloo who are opposed to light rail transit. It reads as follows:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, are supportive of improvements to the public transit system in Waterloo region, we are opposed to regional council’s plan for light rail transit for reasons including cost, appropriateness and feasibility;

“We, the undersigned residents of Waterloo region, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“We hereby request that the Parliament of Ontario provide provincial funding to the region of Waterloo for improved bus transit only.”

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from First Nations youth in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

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

“To continue the partnership with the Right To Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

“To expand the Right To Play program to other First Nations communities; and

“To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth.”

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

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

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

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario’s youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

“To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

“To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

“To continue to support Ontario’s families through these initiatives; and

“To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to continued growth across the province.”

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s an honour to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This is quite an interesting one; it’s new: “Stop the Extra 8% Tax on Gasoline.” It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s harmonized sales tax (HST) will increase the cost of gasoline at the pumps by 8% on July 1”—that means it will be \$1.08 a litre; and

“Whereas Ontario families are still hoping to recover from the worst recession in recent memory and gasoline remains a necessity for essential travel in business,

commerce, employment, education, travel, health care and more; and

“Whereas gasoline is already taxed by the province of Ontario at 14.7 cents per litre and the HST would add an estimated \$1.7 billion” in windfall gas profits from diesel and gasoline alone; and

“Whereas if your family spends \$100 a week on gasoline, this will add \$8 per week, or \$400 a year,” just for gas; and

“Whereas Canada’s provinces and territories have the power to regulate gasoline prices;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario legislature to ease the burden of the HST by reducing the existing provincial gas tax by an amount equal to the Ontario share of the HST on gasoline and diesel.”

I present this and sign it and hand it to Torin, one of the new pages here at Queen’s Park.

1550

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Dave Levac: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario’s youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

“To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

“To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

“To continue to support Ontario’s families through these initiatives; and

“To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to continued growth across the province.”

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

“Whereas the Milton-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

“Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

“Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

“Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location ... on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition, as I agree with it, and pass it to my page, Jameson.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition sent to me from the Ontario Real Estate Association, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: arena ice, soccer and baseball field rentals ... gas at the pumps ... home heating oil and electricity; gym fees; golf green fees; ski lift tickets; movie, theatre and event admission fees; Internet services; cellphone bills; boat rentals, fishing licences, charters and wood for the campfire; home renovations; and real estate transactions;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I affix my name in support.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there is a unique opportunity to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the Legislative

Assembly [should] ensure us that this valuable resource is used to advantage all Ontarians while respecting the environment and rights of the First Nations people;

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

“To develop the natural resources in the Ring of Fire for economic benefit for Ontario;

“To ensure that the development of the Ring of Fire does so only within the guidelines of an EPA report;

“To respect the rights of the First Nations people and communities; and

“To work with local industry to bring employment to northern Ontario communities.”

I support this, and I will send it down with page Neale.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snow-plowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes ... for Ontario consumers.”

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from” hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU trust “to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

“Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

“Whereas the government’s own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

“Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

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

That Premier McGuinty “support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions” from hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU trust to OMERS.

I’m happy to say that there is a bill before the House in which the government does address this issue. I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have another petition here on the same issue as my previous one. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there is a unique opportunity to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the Legislative Assembly [should] ensure us that this valuable resource is used to advantage all Ontarians while respecting the environment and rights of the First Nations people;

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

“To develop the natural resources in the Ring of Fire for economic benefit for Ontario;

“To ensure that the development of the Ring of Fire does so only within the guidelines of an EPA report;

“To respect the rights of the First Nations people and communities; and

“To work with local industry to bring employment to northern Ontario communities.”

I will sign this petition and send it down with page Anthony.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010

SUR LES PROFESSIONS COMPTABLES

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to repeal and replace the statutes governing The Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario / Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à abroger et à remplacer les lois régissant l’Association des

comptables généraux accrédités de l'Ontario, les Comptables en management accrédités de l'Ontario et l'Institut des comptables agréés de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale. I just want to say at the very outset that I have been extremely privileged to be able to share the responsibilities of the Ministry of the Attorney General with my colleague from Willowdale, David Zimmer.

He has worked enormously hard. He has filled that role for much longer than I've been filling this role. It is extremely important to have somebody with knowledge, insight and a great work ethic, and a fabulous listener who is able to deal with the many and varied issues that are part of the responsibilities of this ministry, able to deal with the very tricky issues, most of which never find the public discourse, most of which never get into public debate, particularly in this House. I really am, as I say, quite privileged and very pleased to be working with my colleague from Willowdale.

1600

This piece of legislation is one that will modernize the acts governing accounting within the province of Ontario. I want to recognize at the outset the representatives from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario and the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, who are present in the gallery witnessing the debate here. I can say at the outset that this proposed legislation has support from all three bodies. In fact, they have been pushing for a modernization of the legislation governing accounting within the province of Ontario for some period of time.

Before I get into the details of what this act particularly deals with, I think it is important to recognize that accounting is a self-regulated profession within the province of Ontario. It is extremely important, when a Legislature debates and proposes and considers acts governing accounting, that the self-regulated profession itself is leading the charge for renewal and for reform. As I will expand upon in a few moments, that fact can give the public great confidence that we are moving in the right direction.

Members of the public might be watching and wondering, "What are you talking about, 'a self-regulated profession'?" Within the province of Ontario, there are over 30 self-regulated professions. I am a member of one: the legal profession. What we essentially have done historically in the province of Ontario is to ensure that some professions, like accounting, law and engineering, have additional expertise supplied to their management, regulation, disciplinary issues, professional standards—additional expertise in the form of those who are actually experts in the field. We can't all be experts on everything within the Legislature, and we don't expect necessarily that the great public service that we have, the finest in the world, within the province of Ontario can be experts in everything everywhere. So we have created these self-regulatory bodies to govern certain professions. It means

in the case of accounting that when it comes to professional standards, we get the accountants' input, not simply the input of those such as ourselves who are legislators or those in the public service who support the great work of government. It means that in cases of discipline we get the special expertise of those who are part of the profession and not simply those of us who legislate or support, through the public service, the work of the Legislature, and so on it goes.

What we heard from our colleagues in the accounting profession was that the acts governing accounting within the province of Ontario needed to be renewed and refreshed. They needed to reflect the modern-day reality, which is the economy of Ontario, the economy of the world. Accounting is an enormously important part of the economy of this province, and this province's economy is part of the world economy. We trade with countries all over the world. The companies doing business in the province of Ontario invariably trade with companies not only in the States, Europe, India, China—all over the world. Indeed, we have representatives going back and forth across borders every minute of every day.

It's essential, when you're making contractual relationships all over the world, that those making the relationships can rely on the fact that there is a firm financial foundation to the ones they're contracting with, and that that firm financial foundation is supported in good measure by the work of the accounting profession.

It's also essential in modern-day society that individuals in our own business have access to professionals who can assist us with our personal, our families' and our related financial dealings.

For all the efforts of Legislatures here and everywhere else throughout Canada, the tax laws are very complex. They can stymie the best-intended readers. People with busy lives who are confronted with taxation issues, whether they're at that time of year when we all file our taxes; whether they're with the disposition of certain property and whether you have to pay tax on that disposition; whether they're at the very sad times of the passing of a family member or loved one; or whether they're in the acquisition of property for something other than your matrimonial home—you need expert advice to make sure that you pay all the taxes you should but you don't pay the taxes you shouldn't. We all have the right to make sure that we pay the right taxes. Again, we rely on our good friends in the accounting profession to give us that excellent expert advice.

Within companies, you have people who can provide the nuts-and-bolts advice, but within companies and in all three parts of the profession you have those with an accounting background, accounting expertise, who can speak to not only the numbers issues within a company but how to make the company more profitable, how to engage in business more profitably and how to structure transactions so that they increase and improve economic activity.

So much of what the accounting profession does is unseen by the people of the province of Ontario, but it is

enormously important to the economic health and safety of the people in the province of Ontario—enormously important. It really touches us every minute of every day in what we do in our lives. So I want to say a special thank you and salute to those who are in all of the branches of the accounting profession, to those who have dedicated their lives to their profession, and thank them for the work that they've done in making sure that we have a piece of legislation, which will be debated in this House, that really has at its heart the updating of that legislation.

Why do we need to update it? At the moment we have one public act and two private acts, and some of them haven't been updated in quite some number of years. If you think—

Interjection: How long has it been?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Many years. It's an excellent question my friend asked. Many years.

It's appropriate that the legislation be flexible enough to meet the needs of the time, strong enough to support the weight of the issues of the time, and that that legislation be specific enough and directed to the issues that might arise in our time. We are, after all, well into the 21st century, so legislation that might have been appropriate in another century needs to be refreshed, needs to be updated and does need to be improved.

Some of the issues that are addressed in this bill before the House—and I'm really looking forward to listening to the debate from all sides of the House—include the following.

First of all, when you have a self-regulated body, it not only simply licenses people when they graduate school and finish their time with businesses and are ready to enter the profession, but that self-regulated body is there to make sure that the members of the association, once they're members, continue to uphold and maintain the standards which are at the heart of a self-regulated profession.

The self-regulated bodies must make sure that members continually update themselves, ensure they're aware of the rules and improve their skills. When those members fall below a standard—maybe it's sickness, maybe it's some other reason, but they can't perform to the same high degree—that body, the self-regulated body, has not only the legislated duty but the responsibility to take action, because it's ultimately the self-regulated profession that protects the public. At the beginning of the day and at the end of the day, they act not directly in the interest of their members, they act in the interest of the public. So what we're really doing here is strengthening the protections that the public need and they expect and, if they weren't there, they would demand. That's really what we're doing by amending, refreshing, renewing this approach to public accounting.

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These provisions will strengthen the ability of each of these bodies to remove members who, for whatever reason, are not able to perform to the high standards that

are required by the demands of accounting in modern-day society.

I want to just inject that we consulted quite extensively on this, not simply with the accounting profession itself; we heard from others. I know the debate will elicit further comment. I'm looking forward to that. We heard from a number of others about this bill.

One of the other aspects of the bill that we want to make sure is addressed through legislation is to specifically spell out and to be clear about the power of the different bodies to admit members, to expel members and, yes, to discipline members. The discipline doesn't have to be expulsion. The discipline can be suspension of all or some privileges. The discipline could take other forms. In other types of professional bodies, it can take many different forms, such as requiring some remedial work, and the measures that are taken by the self-regulated body can be for some egregious conduct or for something as simple as not filing your material. If you don't make a filing on time, a reporting to the governing body, then the governing body has a right to be concerned that maybe, if you're not doing that, you might not be doing something else you should be doing. It's an early flag that there is something that might be amiss and needs to be addressed by the governing body.

So what this legislation will do is ensure that the self-regulated bodies have the ability to oversee in the way that the public would expect. Now, you say, how can a body that has an office resident somewhere in the province of Ontario—we'd actually encourage them all to have head offices in the city of London, speaking personally—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I would say Sudbury.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: And my colleague would say Willowdale, but wherever it is within the province of Ontario—a little salute to my colleagues from the professions in the gallery. Wherever it is within the province of Ontario, if they're in their offices, how do they actually know, what's the check on whether a member of one of their branches is actually doing what they should be doing in that member's offices, which are somewhere else? There is a very important power that the self-regulated profession has. It's an enormously important power. It's the power to inspect. It's the power to access the records of, yes, a private business that is a member of the profession, to take a good look, to pass a professional eye over the books and records to make sure that those books and records are not only being kept up to date, not only being kept appropriately, but actually reflect the high standards that should be undertaken and must be undertaken, and in Ontario, we're delighted, are undertaken by our accounting profession.

I simply want to say that we have an accounting profession within the province of Ontario that takes a backseat to nobody. It is as good as any in the world. That's important, because when the world looks to Ontario, they can rely on the highest standards of accounting at all levels within the province of Ontario. I

say thanks to those who are the self-regulators here for the efforts that they've taken on so many levels to make sure that that is the case. That is enormously important.

This power to inspect, power to review, power to discipline individual members' or groups of members' practices is extremely important. It's the engine that can drive compliance. It's really the guts and the heart of the regulation that a profession has over its constituent members.

You can tell by my enthusiasm here that this is important stuff. I like the engine room. I like the rooms that make things go. I love systems. Systems make it work. They're not the banner stuff. It's not the glitz. These are systems, these are the engines of the economy of the province, and these self-regulated professions are at the heart of public protection because—you know what?—hard-working women and men out there, families, don't have time to look at this. They don't have time to make sure the protections are there. They don't know, when they meet somebody, what standard they're achieving. Their confidence within the province of Ontario is in the designation. Their confidence is given by the fact that we have a self-regulated body that answers those questions for members of the public who want them answered but can't.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You can't shatter that trust.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Absolutely. As my colleague from Peterborough says, you cannot shatter that trust. You must build it. You must add to it, support it and applaud it.

This updated act that we're proposing and debating is going to make sure that the self-regulated profession and its different branches have the ability to go in and inspect. You say, "What happens when they inspect?" I say that at least two things happen. One, they have to be able to keep their findings confidential. They are the self-regulated profession. This material can't be spread all over the place. It would do undue damage to individual members and their practices if material just went out. There has to be a trust relationship that is at the heart of the power to inspect, but the second part of it is that the bodies need to be able to take action. The fact is that in the different pieces of legislation, we had penalties. You don't like to speak about penalties, but sometimes it's necessary. We had enforcement mechanisms that might have been good for their time, but their time was many years ago. A \$300 fine for a practice that may be generating many, many thousands of dollars in fees from members of the public is not very much. We need to have penalties, enforcement where it's necessary—only where it's necessary—which is consistent with the issues at play and which is significant enough to provide the necessary specific and general deterrent to those who might think—not that anyone would, but if anybody might think that shortcuts are okay, because our accounting profession in the province of Ontario has always said that shortcuts are not okay.

We need to give them the tools to use in their good judgment—it's not mine; it's not my colleagues'—in the

circumstances where they consider that the standards they are there to uphold are not being achieved. The enforcement must be robust enough to give some teeth to the mechanisms with which they are supporting and enhancing the public interest here.

That's another part of this particular piece of legislation, a part that won't be used very often because we have very high standards here, a part that we'd love never to have to be used, but if it has to be, it has to be robust enough that it has some teeth. There will be fines now of up to \$10,000, which is going to get some attention wherever that's needed. We don't think it will be needed very often, but if it is needed, it'll be there.

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There were, in the course of these discussions, in the course of developing this legislation and as we introduced it at first reading, and now we're here for second reading debate of course, some questions raised about members of accounting bodies certified elsewhere, outside the province of Ontario, outside Canada, and whether they would be able to come to Ontario for conferences, for example, and use their designations, which aren't recognized here in the province of Ontario, when they were attending, for example, conferences.

I want to say that we've listened very extensively to those who have suggested some amendments or suggested some changes. We've listened very extensively, but I want to be clear to the members of the public: Your protection is number one. Public protection is number one. Public protection is at the heart of the self-regulated profession, and we will not, as a government, support an approach which takes away from the protections we have long recognized, supported and expected within the province of Ontario, protections which are inherent in our self-regulated approach and our self-regulated accounting profession.

But given that, we have listened, and we're aware that some foreign designations are the same as or close to those used by Ontario bodies. We're going to introduce, at the appropriate time—if this bill passes second reading and goes to committee, we're prepared to introduce in committee amendments that would relax the current prohibition on the use of a foreign designation while continuing to protect clients of Ontario accountants from confusion about the qualifications or oversight of their professional advisers. As I say, this is something that really arises in the context, for example, of those practising accounting elsewhere who have designations that look similar, but aren't recognized within the province of Ontario through our self-regulated approach. Can they continue to come to, for example, a conference and use the designation in the program or something? We're prepared to work on and introduce those amendments should this bill get past second reading and go to committee. We're happy to speak to that at that particular time.

I think it is a great privilege, as I say, to be able to be part of an approach, part of a government that looks at these issues, which won't be top of mind for a lot, but

really are essential, and participate in the second reading debate about updating the profession of accounting, a profession which I have said that I have enormous respect for and enormous admiration for. They practise all over the province of Ontario: Sudbury, Peterborough, Willowdale and my community of London—great members of all branches of the accounting profession.

As I wrap up my comments, I really want to thank the members, the accounting profession within the province of Ontario and those who work so hard on self-regulation to protect the public and ensure that we continue to have the highest standards of accounting in the province of Ontario to be found anywhere in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The member from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very pleased to speak to this legislation in this debate.

What I'm going to do is make some introductory remarks for a few minutes, then I'd like to walk through some of the specific detail of the legislation because, of course, that's where a lot of the issues crop up. Third, I'd like to run through a number of questions and answers that I've been getting and other members, I expect, from all sides of this House have been getting about some of the details of the legislation, and then I have a few concluding remarks.

I should say that after I was first elected to the Legislature in October 2003, a few weeks later I became the parliamentary assistant in the Attorney General's office and I think it was the very next day or perhaps two days later that I had my first encounter with the issues represented in this legislation. I can say that those first two or three weeks, as I was adjusting to my new life here in the Legislature, the very first group of stakeholders that I came into contact with was the accounting profession, broadly speaking. I know in that first few weeks they were some of the very—in fact, they were the very first stakeholder meetings that I had. I met with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, I met with the certified management accountants, and I met with the certified general accountants.

My reaction to that first meeting—and I come from a legal background and I had sort of a general appreciation of the accounting profession but I was not acquainted in any particularity with the issues that each of those branches of the accounting profession were facing. I have to congratulate and thank each of those accounting professions—and there are representatives of the three branches of the profession here in the Legislature today; they're following the debate closely. Each of them—the chartered accountants, the certified managed accountants, the certified general accountants—all in a very professional way, laid out a host of issues that their profession specifically and the broader profession generally were facing.

I spent a lot of time those first couple of weeks, first couple of months, just listening, getting to familiarize myself with the issues and, just as importantly, getting to familiarize myself with the various personalities in the

accounting profession who were speaking to those issues. I have to congratulate each of those branches of the accounting profession for the professionalism with which they raised these very sensitive issues with me in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General.

It quickly became clear that the three branches of the profession saw that at this point in time—that was late 2003, early 2004—they wanted to modernize the governance aspects of the profession and the issue was really how had to proceed. Historically, the three branches of the profession—ICA, CGA, CMA—had their own, if I can use this expression, piece of turf that they looked after over the years. I think there was a recognition by all branches of the profession, given the modern international economy, the modern national economy, the trade among the provinces, all of the issues that flowed out of the North American free trade agreement, that this idea that the accounting profession should move from a more segmented approach to the profession to a more holistic approach to the profession was paramount in their minds.

Of course, the issue was how to get to that degree of commonality, how to establish the groundwork so that the members of those three branches of the profession could move from branch to branch, could do the work that they had done traditionally, and how they could incorporate or begin to do some of the work of the other segments of the profession.

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Some people may say, well, you have three branches of the profession and they were all trying to cut out a piece of the turf for themselves and it was really a professional trade war, if you will. The CAs wanted to do one piece, the CGAs wanted to do another piece, and the CMAs, another piece. I can tell you that that was never, never the case. In all of my dealings with each of those branches of the profession—CAs, CGAs, CMAs—paramount in their discussions and paramount in their minds when they raised issues with me in my capacity as parliamentary assistant was the public interest and how the accounting profession, broadly speaking, should serve the public interest.

At the end of the day, with the kind of economy that we have had traditionally in Ontario and that we're now trying to reach out and even expand and build further with lots of the things that are in our Open Ontario throne speech—and that will be fleshed out in more detail in a couple of days—there was a recognition that the essential thing to get right here was the correct balance between the needs of the accounting profession, speaking generally; the needs of each of the three branches of the accounting profession; and the public interest. The question was how to get that balance right.

In fairness to the professions, and I must compliment each of them for this, whenever we approached an area where it might seem that an issue—perhaps a conflict or a competing interest well short of a conflict; even just a competing interest between the desires, needs and

expectations of the profession and the public interest—each of the branches of the profession ceded their particular interest to the public interest. Again, I do want to compliment the members of the profession for that outstanding level of professionalism.

Because of that outstanding level of professionalism that the profession brought to these discussions, you can be assured that that same level of professionalism is carried forth in the detailed work they do as accountants at whatever branch and in whatever area of accounting, whether it's providing services to a small business in rural Ontario, whether it's providing accounting services to a big multinational company here in Ontario, or anything in between—accounting services to the local barber, some accounting services to the senior who is preparing a tax return. In my judgment, the professionalism that they have shown in putting the public interest forward was truly outstanding.

At the end of the discussions—I fast-forward ahead to March 2009, when we introduced the legislation. I thought it would be appropriate to put on the record three separate quotes from the leadership of each of the branches of the profession. Let me start, in no particular order—in fact, what I'll do is I'll start just randomly.

Doug Brooks, who in March 2009 was the CEO of the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, said this with respect to the legislation: “The new legislation,” if passed, “would be very helpful to us as we seek to modernize the governance of our accounting body. We appreciate the willingness of the government to work with us on the bill and to ensure we have the tools we need, moving into the future.”

What did Mr. Brooks stress? Modernization, governance, working with the government to move into the future; that is, the future economy and the very challenging circumstances that we face here in Ontario to build and grow our businesses, to regulate our businesses and to make Ontario a place where everybody in the world wants to come and do business. One of the reasons they want to come here and do business in Ontario is because of the strength and the integrity and the competency of the accounting profession.

Mr. Tom Warner, who is the vice-president and registrar of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, said, “We are pleased that the government has dealt with a number of issues that we see as essential to our regulatory function in the public interest—notably to permit more effective enforcement of our disciplinary powers, the clear statement of the confidential nature of information that comes to the institute's attention in its work, and an increase in the fines for misuse of the chartered accountant designation by non-members.”

If you look closely at what Mr. Warner has said, he speaks of the regulatory function in the public interest—again, the highest tradition of the accounting profession—and the disciplinary powers to regulate their members—again, in the public interest.

Mr. Merv Hillier, who at the time was the president and CEO of the Society of Management Accountants,

had this to say: “The proposed bill would establish CMAs under the operating name of the organization, Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, with a modern and transparent structure for governing our members. We were happy with the open process of developing the legislation, so that we could see the fair treatment given to all three major accounting bodies in this useful update to our legislation.”

Again, I draw your attention to the themes, in the quote that I've just given by him, of modernization, transparency, and “the open process of developing the legislation”—that is, working with the profession so that we got the balance just right. He particularly noted the fair treatment given to all three major accounting professions in working through this legislation.

I think that those three quotes that I have just provided really corroborate what I said in my earlier remarks about the integrity of the profession and the high standards of the profession as they worked with government to undertake this process.

Let me just go through now some of the specific detail in the legislation so that we can move the debate to more specifics.

The legislation, if passed, will help to ensure that all the designated accounting bodies in Ontario that are or will soon be responsible for regulating public accounting will have the support to oversee their profession. This is essentially a good-governance piece of legislation, the purpose being to ensure that the accounting bodies have the power and structure to serve in the roles anticipated by the Public Accounting Act, going back to 2004. That act modernized the regulation of public accounting while ensuring a continuing high standard of competence from those who qualified for a licence.

This bill, if passed, would modernize and harmonize the governance of the three main accounting bodies in this province—again, these themes: modernization, harmonization and good governance.

The three bodies that are covered—I've already mentioned that, but the technical names are the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario.

The existing statutes that have governed these three bodies are old. Two of them are, in fact, private statutes with no public interest element at all. Under this proposed legislation, all three statutes governing each of those professions would be public acts, and again we have this theme of the public interest and so on.

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Now, we talk about the harmonization or the rationalization of the various parts of those three acts that governed the profession until this legislation. Some of the existing powers would be expanded and clarified; others would be adjusted. The proposed legislation will give accounting bodies the following: the power to discipline former members; the power to get a court order to take over a practice of an incapacitated, missing or dead member; the power to review mental capacity of

members; the power to introduce bylaws to ensure full compliance with the Public Accountants Council standard for governing public accountants and various standards, and details about how the licensing process will be enacted.

The effect of these amendments will ensure that Ontario clients can depend on the qualifications and, equally important, on the regulatory oversight of those offering accounting services under the several designations that I've already referred to.

As we heard the Attorney General say earlier, the Accounting Professions Act is the logical complement to the Public Accounting Act of 2004, which gave special status to these three professional bodies. It modernized the regulation of public accounting; it clarified the definition of public accounting, which determines what activities require a licence. That's a very important point because there are activities that individuals might perform in assisting an individual with financial matters that are not accounting practices and there are others that are accounting practices. It's when we cross the line to the accounting practices that the legislation kicks in with its various governance obligations.

The Accounting Professions Act, if passed, is going to emphasize, as I've said several times now, modernization and harmonization and, above all, make accountancy more transparent. If I can just make some reference to some of the financial difficulties that have occurred south of the border in recent years, many of those issues that developed and caused such discord in our economy and in our world of business, when you sit back and take a hard look at it and analyze some of the detail, are really transparency issues. There were various accountancy processes and transactions going on in the books and so forth and so on that really were so opaque that the public had great difficulty understanding them, and the accepted wisdom is that was certainly one of the factors leading to the economic difficulties, particularly south of the border. That's why this legislation has such an emphasis on modernization, transparency, discipline—accountability, in short.

The proposed legislation does not impose new burdens on the accounting bodies but really clarifies their powers and obligations and, in particular, the legislation does not impose any new burdens on the accountants' clients. The legislation really is directed to the profession, which will then make all of the necessary adjustments to effect the legislation.

The proposed bill would also ensure that the objectives of all three bodies in the accounting profession, including governing their members, are in the public interest. Again, I come back to this issue of the public interest, because in the last analysis, what this legislation is all about is to create a level of public protection, to protect the public's interest in the accountancy profession and the effect that the accountancy profession has on the activities of the members of the public.

It will also establish the basic rights and duties of a member. This is very important because for the first time,

the rights and duties of membership in the profession are going to be clearly set out. Again, this can be found in the previous statutes, but the problem is that they're buried in different statutes, they're buried within the regulations that surround each of the statutes, and it's very, very difficult at times to dig out the detail of just what the basic rights and the particular duties and obligations of members are.

This legislation, bringing the three branches of the accounting profession together, again, is a modernization, a rationalization, all with the idea behind it that whatever is being done by the legislation—then, once the legislation is passed, by the members themselves and the respective governing bodies—everything is done in the public interest.

The legislation generally clarifies the role of the act. Particularly, it clarifies the role of the bylaws pursuant to the act, and it authorizes matters that need to be authorized, remitting the technical matters to the bylaws. Now, rather than having three acts, two of which were private acts, and three sets of regulations pursuant to three acts, as I've said, two of which were private acts, we're going to have one piece of legislation. This is good for the accounting profession, it's good for the public and it's good for our economy. It creates that level of confidence when businesses are being newly set up, when they're expanding, when they're just at a maintenance level, when businesses are deciding whether to come from a foreign jurisdiction or another province to locate in Ontario. One of the great attractions is the stability, the clarity, the fairness and the transparency of the accounting profession. I suppose that's the single greatest thing that this legislation is going to do.

The new statute, then, relative to the three statutes that governed the profession before we introduced this bill—at its heart, it's a manageable statute. There's a clarity there. It's easy to understand by the members of the accounting profession; it's easy to understand by any layperson who wants to look into it and find out what the obligations of a member of the profession are and how things work. It's easy to understand for everybody. That's good, because the things that business needs and wants are clarity, simplicity and effectiveness.

The bill would also establish the parameters of how membership status of individuals, firms and corporations are going to be determined. The bill provides general duty on regulatory bodies to keep all of their information confidential except for particular listed exceptions in the act or with court approval to release that detail. Again, that is a confidence-building detail. People will have confidence that the proprietary material and the confidential material that their accountants have to deal with will be kept confidential, except for some very specific, listed items and, of course, the overall supervision of the courts.

As I said in my introductory remarks, the accounting bodies were extensively consulted on this bill and support the provisions, and we continue to work with the accounting profession as we walk this bill through the

Legislature. This is a strong piece of legislation that is going to ensure greater public transparency for the accounting profession and provide the accounting profession with much-needed powers to regulate the aspects of their profession. That was one of the things that I heard early on from each of the professions when I first tackled these issues.

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Having touched on these things, you can see why the best way to think about this piece of legislation is that it's really a piece of consumer protection legislation, because the businesses, people doing their income tax returns, members of the profession, anybody who needs—in fact, at some time in our life we all need the services of an accountant. Certainly, if you just close your eyes for a second and think of a society where the accountancy profession is unregulated, chaotic, not supervised, ill disciplined, the very first thing that happens is the economy breaks down. The economy breaks down because members of the public, foreign jurisdictions, foreign banks, domestic banks, lose confidence in the transparency, the clarity and the fairness of the system. You only have to turn your mind to some foreign jurisdictions that we read about in the paper, where the accountancy profession has broken down. Almost the first thing that happens is the economy breaks down. People lose confidence, and it's a downhill trip from there.

As I said, as I've been working through on this issue, I've had a number of quite specific questions and answers that have come before me, and I thought I would share some of those with you.

This is a question that commonly comes up: "Will the bill be amended to permit the use of foreign accounting designations that may be the same as or close to recognized Canadian designations?" Well, we heard from several foreign-based accounting organizations, from their members, from immigrant assistance bodies, that holders of foreign designations should not be barred from using those designations here, especially to attract business from people who recognize the designations from their country of origin. We reflected on that, and I think the Attorney General touched base on that in his comments. What the government has to do is balance the interest of foreign-trained accountants to use their foreign designations with the interest in potential Ontario clients of accountants to rely on the qualifications and oversight of the bodies whose initials are familiar to them. The government—and this is an important piece of the intent here—will propose amendments to the bill to clarify the extent of the rights to use confusing foreign designations. These amendments will clarify that situation.

Another question that I've heard asked several times is, "Does the proposed legislation affect new labour mobility rules of the Agreement on Internal Trade?" The answer is, no, the proposed legislation does not affect labour mobility rules or prevent all three of the accounting bodies from being compliant with them.

Let me tell you something about the membership. Another question that I get asked a lot is, "Does it make

sense for a membership organization to have any say over its former members?" So we're talking about a member who has retired from the profession, resigned from the profession or is no longer practising as an accountant. The organizations are regulators, not just membership organizations. For instance, the Ontario College of Teachers and all the regulated health professions have the same powers to regulate former members. Being able to pursue former members prevents them from preserving a clean record by a timely resignation. So there's no more of, if there's a spot of trouble, one resigns and then at some point later tries to come back or avoids having to deal with the issue that perhaps caused the person to resign. A full discipline record can protect the public when former members apply for readmission or admission in another province.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of those things because it emphasizes this issue of transparency, discipline of members, clarity and, above all, as I've said, it being a piece of consumer protection legislation, the public interest.

Just let me take a minute and touch on perhaps looking into the future a bit. We were all here the other day for the throne speech, and the theme of the throne speech was Open Ontario. I spoke to the throne speech yesterday morning and talked about the economy of the province being at a fork in the road. We're at a very difficult stage in our economic life here in Ontario and we have some choices to make. We can go forward into a new Ontario. We can do whatever we have to do to rebuild and continue to build the Ontario economy. We will do whatever we have to do to rebuild and recapture our manufacturing base in Ontario. We will do everything we can to develop new business entrepreneurship, clean water, green energy. All of those sorts of stuff—that's looking into the future. What we don't want to do at the fork in the road is go back.

So, how does this accounting legislation play into that? In any competitive economy in the world—and make no mistake about it, Ontario is in a very competitive economic world. We have to compete with China. We have to compete with India. We have to compete with the United States, 50 of those states, particularly the border states along here. We have to compete with the EU.

One of the very effective attractions when we're in that global economic competition—we're all competing for those foreign businesses. We want them to come to Ontario. We want them to locate in the GTA. I want them to locate in Willowdale. That's my plug for Willowdale. Whether we're Conservative members, NDP members or Liberal members, one thing we all agree on is that we want that foreign business here in Ontario. One of the things that we can do to attract them is to offer businesses throughout the world one of the finest accounting professions in the world. That's the reputation that the accounting profession in Ontario has had over the generations. This new legislation will ensure that that reputation continues—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened pretty intensively to the Attorney General when he spoke, and for the last while, I've been enduring the member from Willowdale. I'll get a copy of Hansard and certainly brush through it.

He said in his summation remarks that we're in a global environment and accounting trustworthiness is extremely important. We all agree with this. It's not a problem. But he says we're competing with India. In fact, I'm going to introduce a bit of a change. We're not competing just with India. It looks like we're competing with Korea. It also looks like Ontario is actually competing directly with Greece.

Look, David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor, suggests that there is a significant "structural" deficit in the economy of Ontario.

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So we should call all three of these accounting organizations into the Legislature, right on the floor, and get to the bottom of this \$25-billion deficit. Where has the money gone? It appears to me that the Minister of Finance and the Premier aren't capable of spending Ontario taxpayers' money wisely. You, the taxpayers of Ontario: I'm dealing directly with you now; I'm standing up for you. What I'm trying to say is, we have a deficit in this province and we need—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: The member for Durham seeks to call the members of the accounting bodies onto the floor, but if the member would check the standing orders, he would find that strangers are, in fact, not allowed on the floor. So what he is proposing is in fact beyond the scope of the Legislature—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. That is not a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: The unworthy interruptions by this member are just intolerable. We agree with you—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the Attorney General and then I tried to listen as well, intently, to the member from Willowdale. I kept hoping that his colleague in the next seat, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, would turn the pages faster, sort of like at a piano recital when you have someone who flips the pages, so that we could get to the end a little sooner.

I also watched with great interest the pages, because, as I look at those young faces, I know that their colleagues are having math lessons, and I could read into those young faces that they wished they were having math lessons today instead of having to listen to this.

As I listened to the Attorney General, he was full of passion. I don't know where he saw passion in all of this, but he had some passion. When I listened to the member from Willowdale, he talked about a whole bunch of things, but one of the strangest and most bizarre comments that he had to make, and I hope he comments on this, is that he likens this to some kind of consumer

protection. Consumer protection, I always thought, was in the ambit of the government to make sure that companies don't rip off consumers, to make sure that companies are getting their money's worth and that people don't finagle others out of dollars and things like that. I'm not sure how this bill fits in with consumer protection.

I do see the necessity of the bill. I do understand why these groups have to be regulated with the public rather than private bills. I do understand a great many things. But perhaps in the two minutes he has left, he can elucidate, in clear and certain terms, terms that the pages and I can understand, exactly how this equates to consumer protection, because really in his comments he lost, I think, all of us on this particular point.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I am pleased to rise and make a few comments on the Accounting Professions Act that was just presented to the House for an hour by Minister Bentley and the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer. I think they did a commendable job and certainly encapsulated everything the bill could possibly have in it, at least from my view. There may be other points that they maybe did not get to. But I think, as Minister Bentley said, we have all probably used accountants from time to time, and we respect and certainly appreciate the good work that they do at all different levels.

I think it's important to note that I didn't hear any particular comment in disagreement with the bill, and I think it's important, even to that point, to say that the minister did say that the bill, like virtually all our government bills, will be going to committee, where the opposition and the government can continue a fulsome discussion on Bill 158.

The parliamentary assistant also quoted from the three various bodies that are affected by this bill in a positive way and the view that they have that this bill indeed did go through consultation with all three of the groups. They, too, believe that it is important to their various organizations and that the consultation was fulsome.

If this bill were to be passed, it would contribute to the competitiveness of our financial sector by strengthening and supporting the bodies that govern professional accountants. Our government is proposing to ensure greater transparency for the accounting profession. There are many other points that the parliamentary assistant alluded to. I look forward to the continuation of the debate and, of course, when this bill would be referred to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was interested in the words of the minister and Attorney General, and the member for Willowdale. I listened very carefully. Both of them talked about accounting being very important to Ontario business, being very important to the businesses in Ontario that go beyond the borders of Ontario, not only to the rest of Canada but also out across the world.

In getting ready for this bill to come to the House, we have done some background work and worked with the CGAs—the Certified General Accountants of Ontario—the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. None of these bodies have any problems whatsoever with this act. They are all very supportive of this bill and they look forward to its speedy passing in the House.

There is only one voice of dissent that I have heard concerning this legislation, and that is from the CIMAs, the international management accountants, who are based in England. They have about 1,000 members operating in Ontario. They have authorities around the world. If you think about it, the British did business around the world, and this is an accounting organization that operated around the world, giving some consistency to accounting practices around the world. This bill does not take into account their operations in Ontario. If these accountants are not recognized in this bill, it takes Ontario out of the international industry more than it puts us in, so perhaps in his two-minute response, the parliamentary assistant could talk about the CIMAs and whether or not they're going to be recognized in this bill and accommodated in some fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me thank the member opposite from Halton for recognizing and agreeing with me in my remarks that the CMAs, the CGAs and the CAs are supportive of the legislation, that they've worked with government to ensure that the very best bill came forward.

With respect to your inquiry about foreign designations, I think I did touch—in fact, I know I touched on that in my remarks in the 35 minutes that I spoke, so I direct you to the Hansard remarks on that.

What I wanted to just address in the last minute that I have here is that in the throne speech, there was a very clear reference to the ambition of this government to turn Toronto into a global financial centre. That was touched on several times in the throne speech and it was picked up in the press commentary following the throne speech. That's an idea that has been around now for several years. Toronto here in Ontario has achieved a critical mass of the financial sector, principally centred in Toronto, and it's recognized as the third largest financial centre in North America. Among many, many Europeans it's recognized as the leading centre. This new legislation governing the accounting profession is an aspect of turning Toronto into a global financial centre, and that's good for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to say that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member over here for Durham; the member for east of Toronto.

Interjection.

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Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you. Everybody knows John.

It's interesting that this debate quite often shifts to the economy of Ontario and Toronto becoming the fiscal centre of the country and North America—and it's very true. I would look forward to the day when Toronto would be the financial capital of North America. Given the financial meltdown we've seen in the United States, that will move Toronto along that line if in fact the financial community has the conditions in which they're able to grow and prosper. It will depend on this government's performance over the next little while, particularly next Thursday when we get the budget handed down, and whether we're going to see a budget that creates the economic opportunities for the financial community or a budget that focuses on other areas of the economy to the detriment of those areas in which we have a real possibility of becoming global leaders.

Public accounting is an interesting field. In the last little while getting ready for this bill, I've learned more about the public accounting area than I ever thought I would. It is an interesting field, in that it is broken down into a number of different areas. As I mentioned in my questions and comments, there are three principal parties who work in Ontario: the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, commonly known as CAs; the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, or the CMAs; and the Certified General Accountants of Ontario. They are all accountants, they all do work, so I think it's appropriate to ask, what is an accountant, and particularly, what is a public accountant?

Public accounting is the business of expressing independent assurance on financial statements and other financial information of enterprises of every size, to ensure that the information truly reflects their financial conditions. So if this is an independent organization which has a look at using the same standards for every time they look at books, whether they be books of a small company, a large company or a non-profit organization—they use standard procedures. Large and small investors, financial institutions and other third parties then use that assurance to help them make informed investment and lending decisions. Many of those decisions involve investments in RSPs, mutual or pension funds, stock markets etc., making the practice of public accounting relevant to nearly every individual in Ontario. It touches the lives of everyone in this province. It's important to understand that public accounting is something that we may not think of on a day-to-day basis, but it's something that does impact on our day-to-day lives.

The three organizations that operate in Ontario are not identical. They're not necessarily competitive, although their responsibilities do cross over slightly.

Let me start with the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, or CGAs. They currently operate under a private bill, as the minister and the parliamentary assistant pointed out. A private bill is something that comes before the House. It's largely drafted by the organization, and it states their principles as to what they're going to do.

In the case of CGAs, they're affiliated with the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada.

CGA Canada represents CGAs and students in Canada, as well as Bermuda and nations of the Caribbean, the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong. This is truly an international organization. It represents people all over the world. CGA Canada sets educational standards, professional guidelines, provides services and develops the CGA program of professional studies. It also contributes to national and international accounting standards-setting through co-operative professional relationships with other accounting bodies, represents the interests of the public and CGAs, and serves as an advocate for accounting professional excellence.

With the passing of this bill, the CGAs will have on their board of directors three representatives, whom they currently appoint, who are non-CGAs. Those three appointments to their board will now be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. They'll still be members of the general public but they won't be appointed by the organization; they'll be appointed by the government. So that opens that up a bit and makes it a little more democratic.

CGA Ontario is a self-governing body which grants an exclusive right to the CGA designation and controls the professional standards, conduct and discipline of its members and students in the province of Ontario. It represents more than 18,000 CGAs and 9,000 students. A list of current committees and representatives can be found at—and I want to read this website address into the record—cga-ontario.org/contentfiles/about_us/board_chart.pdf. Only an accountant would come up with a Web address like that. I think that's one of the longest ones I've seen.

In contrast to that, the Certified Management Accountants, the CMAs, are also authorized in Ontario by a private bill. This act will change that into a government bill, and in so doing, the government will appoint members to their board and open that up to public scrutiny as well. So that's a good thing.

CMAs provide an integrating perspective to business decision-making, applying best management practices and strategic planning, finance, operations, sales and marketing, information technology and human resources to identify new marketing opportunities, ensure corporate accountability and help organizations maintain a long-term competitive advantage. You can see how this differs from the CGA, which is much more of a bookkeeping process. CMAs are much more of a management process, as the name implies.

CMA Canada grants a professional designation in management accounting and regulates its members under the authorization of provincial legislation. CMA Canada is a partnership of the Society of Management Accountants of Canada and the orders of management accountants of each province. The provincial and territorial partners support their regional memberships and maintain high standards for accreditation and continued competency.

Now we move to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the so-called CAs, which most people think of when they think of accountants or auditors. The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants is a national

body which sets generally accepted accounting principles and generally accepted auditing standards.

The provincial institutes set and enforce standards of qualification and set and enforce the standards of professional conduct. In 1990 the rules of professional conduct were harmonized across Canada.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario was founded in 1879 and is the qualifying and regulatory body of Ontario's 33,000 chartered accountants, and there are 5,000 CA students. Currently, oversight is provided by the public accountants council of Ontario, comprised of a majority of eminent non-accountants, as well as representatives of the province's three recognized accounting bodies, and which, to date, has authorized only the institute to serve as a public accounting licensing body.

The background papers talk about An Act respecting the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario in 1983. The original purposes of the association were to furnish means and facilities by which members of the association and students may increase their knowledge, skill and efficiencies in all things. They also were to hold examinations, prescribe tests of competency, and also to maintain discipline amongst their members.

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In light of the more limited purposes of the association and the lack of provisions related to committees and tribunals, the bylaws were similarly more limited, and the private act that implemented the association provided the framework for granting membership. Appeals were made to the Divisional Court and all members in good standing were to be listed in the public register. That was before they were able to have their own body to make appeals to.

The act provides for the designation of CGAs. That was the original concept of the CGAs as they moved on.

The positions of these three bodies: The CGAs of Ontario welcome the proposed Accounting Professions Act. "The Certified General Accountants of Ontario ... both welcomes and supports the proposed Accounting Professions Act announced today. If passed, the act would provide increased public transparency for accounting professionals, while granting their governing bodies the ability to better protect their clients and the public. The act would help to further define the authority of the three accounting bodies: the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario, working toward greater equality for accounting professionals across Ontario and increasing accountability." The CGAs have unqualified support for this new act.

When it comes to the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario—these are the people who manage the large and small businesses. When we spoke to the Institute of Certified Management Accountants, they indicated that they support the legislation. They have no concerns with the legislation, which is for the most part housekeeping, in their opinion, to account for existing

practices which the existing legislation no longer adequately addresses. It's an update of the status quo that they are happy with.

When it comes to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the institute has worked with the government on this legislation. When we spoke to them, the institute gave indications that they support the legislation. They have no concerns with the legislation, which is for the most part housekeeping to account for existing practices, which the existing legislation no longer adequately addresses.

The three main bodies that it is dealing with support the legislation, as we will on this side of the House. The only fly in the ointment, as it were—earlier I asked the minister to comment on it; he says he did in his remarks, but I don't recall hearing anything in his speech, and I thought I was listening fairly closely. CIMA, which is an organization that is based in Britain—it is the certified international management accountants, I believe—is not recognized in this bill. There's a clause in the bill which indicates that anybody who uses the letters CMA in their name will be subject to fines, and I believe the fines are something in the order of \$10,000. If you look at their initials, it's CIMA, but CMA is in that name and therefore they would not qualify to practise in Ontario.

There are approximately 3,500 of these CIMA accountants in Canada, with 1,000 of them residing in Ontario. They are based in Britain—the UK. In the UK, of course, in the days of the British Empire, accountants would work around the world in the British Empire, and it was important that they had standards throughout the empire that were readable and understandable by the people who were investing, whether they be in foreign countries or in the United Kingdom. So it became an internationally respected and understood organization.

When this bill was introduced, it was important enough that the British consulate came to talk to the Attorney General. We heard that there was some solution to the concerns, but we have not heard what those solutions were, and before this bill goes to committee, it would be very helpful to know from the government how those concerns have been met and why and how CIMA is accommodated in this new act. In trying to contact them in the last couple of days, I have not been successful, but I would like to represent their case to ensure that Canada and Ontario continue to recognize an international body. But as we all recognize and as the parliamentary assistant talked about, we do recognize Ontario as being an international trader, somebody who does business around the world, and it seems to me that we would have a natural use, a natural partnership with an accounting organization that did that work around the world as well.

I would like to see that the CIMA and ACCA designations, both very similar organizations, are accommodated in this act in some fashion so that they can continue to represent Ontario's interests not only in Ontario but around the world.

With that, I think we look forward to the—in order to accommodate those two organizations, this bill will have

to briefly go to committee. I hope the government would see fit to take to it committee so that an amendment can be attached to ensure that these thousands of Ontarians can continue to practise in the way that they have in the past and that their business is not interrupted by the passage of this new bill.

Other than that, we look forward to the speedy passage of this bill, with a brief stay in committee in order to pass a couple of amendments, and we look forward to the government's support of those suggestions.

With that, I would be pleased to pass the floor to my friend from Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I listened intently to my good friend and our party's critic, Mr. Chudleigh from Halton. He follows this quite rigorously and has been very helpful in advising our caucus on the work and progress that has been made, and I think he's made a valid contribution.

He has described most of mechanics of the bill. Bill 158—I think we're all familiar with it—is about 86 pages, so it's a hefty little piece of legislation. But, in fact, if you drill down on it, it really has three separate sections, and those sections of course are divided by the three groups, the three accounting organizations that exist in some form or other today. Then the three sections go into some detail under schedule A for the certified general accountants—schedule B deals with the certified management accountants, and schedule C deals with the CAs or the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

I guess people's eyes start to glaze over, because if you look at this, the three subsections deal in complete detail with pretty much the same set of rules for each of the three organizations. The act, as it says, is to repeal and replace the statutes governing currently, today, the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants, rolling them into one sort of organization. But they still have differences, and I think this is the important thing we should roll out here.

There's an age-old problem that has existed in the accounting profession of the right to do the public audit. That has been the timeless issue, which I don't think is resolved. It's my opinion that the governing body will allow people to write the uniform final exam, which is really organized by the CAs, who are the only ones who are allowed to do the public audits. I think when you look at the traditions of those organizations they've been around for more than 100 years, it's my understanding, and in that time have proven themselves to be an asset, not just to Ontario but to Canada.

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When you look at other provinces, if we're trying to harmonize under the Labour Mobility Act, other provinces allow the other designations to do different functions. So we're not there yet in the context of having a single financial regulator: a securities market. We need to move, again.

This is going to public hearings, it's my understanding. As our critic has advised us, we are in support of the bill as it stands at the moment. He has put forward some clear and more or less technical amendments dealing with the issue of the two groups that are affected; they're both international groups. It's important to look at how long this thing has been dangling out there. In fact, it was introduced here in March 2009—actually, a year ago today: March 23, 2009. It has taken a long time to get us to the middle of the road, so we're not done.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: We've listened to two rather long and repetitive speeches on our side—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen quite intently.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Your eyes tend to glaze over.

Accounting is a profession where you have to pay attention to detail.

I did read an article here which I think is important to bring to the discussion—how it does affect people's lives. The legislation that we're dealing with, Bill 158, does affect people's lives. Changes by government, although well-intended, always have adverse effects on some group. Whether it's changing the role, for instance, of professions under their own colleges, as we're doing today with the full-day or all-day kindergarten—ECE, early childhood educators, are regulated by their own legislative framework, but educators are regulated as well. There's another group where they're maybe not being treated the same, but they will be doing roughly the same thing in the classroom. In this case here, the article I'm referring to is from July 15, 2009, and it's titled, "Foreign-trained Accountants Fear Fines under Ontario Law," Bill 158.

I can point to that section. In the sections of (a), (b) or (c) that I mentioned earlier, in each one of them, it says here, under sections 26 to 31:

"The act creates prohibitions and offences respecting the use of specified designations and initials by unauthorized individuals or entities" from practising as a CIMA, CGA, CA—they all say the same thing—to hold themselves out as one of those designations or to make use of "designations, initials or other text implying that they are entitled to practise as a certified" or other type of an accountant. "A limitation period of two years applies in respect of the offences."

It goes on, to some extent. These are the governance issues about the colleges or the oversight of the profession and how the discipline is executed and what it is. But how does it affect people's lives?

I'm reading the article:

"For more than a decade, Martin Saxton, an accountant originally from Scotland who now has a Toronto business, has printed the professional credentials he earned in the UK on his business cards and resumé.

"Saxton, who runs Arrow Accounting and Book-keeping on Danforth Ave., uses his Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)"—as my colleague from Halton said—"designation, a credential he says is

internationally recognized and that takes an average of three to four years of study to earn." At the same time, we're trying to say that we're globalizing and reaching out for labour mobility.

It goes on to say, "But now he, like other foreign-trained accountants"—in fact, other foreign-trained professionals—"fears he will be penalized under a recent Ontario law." He's referring to Bill 158. "Saxton says he will have to stop using his UK professional designation in promoting his business, or face a fine of up to \$10,000." That's a tax grab, a cash grab.

He goes on: "There are roughly 1,000 people working in Canada with credentials from CIMA. As well, there are about 2,500 who have a designation from the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), another internationally recognized body."

It has come to my attention with a few phone calls that there are about 150 countries that recognize these two UK designations. We take great pride in the respect of the association, especially CAs, and I don't point them out, and yet these are much older and probably under much more scrutiny, or at least for a longer period of time serving the public.

They're getting into the exceptions here, and this is important for the public. This part is an important part because—by the way, these individuals are going to be taxed. As of July 1, there will be HST. When you do your income tax next year—in fact, it will be due at the end of the month here—there will be a new tax of 8%, thanks to Premier McGuinty, another tax grab. Here's what the truth is: Accountants in Ontario—this is important now—do not have to be licensed to file income tax. We have a lot of people putting out shingles here, so we're going to have accountant police running around all over the province giving out tickets of up to—here it is—\$10,000. So any of these highly skilled people without the qualifications or designation—if you put it out there as, "I'm an auditor. I'm one of these terms," you could be fined, and it's Premier McGuinty's police who will be after you. I don't use this in a menacing manner. I say it's more father-knows-best thinking.

Yet they're not in conformance with all of Canada. This is the contradiction here. We've got the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, which is an attempt to get all professions between the provinces, including trades, to be mobile, to move with the liberties and freedoms that we all, as Canadians and Ontarians, expect. Here we have a damper on this because we're not in compliance. I put that on the table for the minister, and I'm sure it will be addressed, because many young people today work in what I call the digital world. If you have read, for instance—the one I like best is *The World is Flat*, and some people may have read that; or *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, his recent book. It says that most accounting in the United States is now being done in India—Bangalore, India.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Bangalore.

Mr. John O'Toole: Bangalore, exactly. But my point being, without the proper words, it's being done in a virtual world. That's as much as we need to know.

In fact, the same practice applies to law itself, and also to other trades and skill sets: radiology and other skill sets, including architecture.

This bill is very superficial in terms of agreeing with professions that are moving slowly under some pressure from the government. I give the government respect: We are supporting this and moving forward to get some harmony, at least amongst the groups in the province. But I'm not digressing. I think if we really want to be leaders and have a vision for Ontario, and we're talking about Ontario being the centre for finance and banking—and I'm in support of this—I don't think we have the leadership and the courage on the other side. This isn't meant in a malicious, partisan way. There's nothing here that I think is new. It's 86 pages, and you can change the reference to the three designations and cut it down by 60 pages.

If I go out and look at these poor people—not poor; these are highly qualified, skilled people from other countries—under the two designations, ACCA and CIMA, they will be threatened with a \$10,000 fine. But the Ontario government—and I'm reading again here—says, “The bill is meant to ensure greater transparency.” I love that: transparency and accountability. They use it in all the words. It's anything but. We should be calling the auditors in to look at eHealth, and in fact we should be looking at the LHINs and calling them to account. The OLG—the WSIB is running a deficit. We need to hire some of these accountants, because it's out of control.

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Let's look at the real numbers here. The budget is about \$106 billion. We're running a deficit of about \$25 billion. That's 25 cents on every dollar that we're borrowing. That's future taxes. Deficits are future taxes, so stay tuned. This government is going over the cliff in terms of any plan.

I can only say that when I look at things like this—this is a real story; I'd encourage members to get a copy of it. Martin Saxton, a native of Scotland who now runs a Toronto accounting business, was basically put out of work, like a lot of the 150,000 people who have lost jobs under Premier McGuinty's plan, or lack of it.

Also, it's important to recognize that, for instance, a financial adviser, these people with designations, FPA and all these other designations as a financial planner—this is another highly convoluted—I don't know if they're properly regulated, but they have to be members of one of the three regulatory bodies to perform any audit. So if somebody is doing a financial analysis or assessment of your investment portfolio, your retirement portfolio, and puts themselves out as a certified financial planner, CFPA and all these designations, they are not qualified to use the term “audit” unless they have one of the three designations. It's very important.

This is when you get right down into the detail.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Are you going until 6?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to make sure that we—yes. We're trying to get to the details of this bill; it's so important, and there's a lot more to be said.

“Paul Costello, head of ACCA in Canada and the US”—this is the association for chartered accountants—“says people should not be charged and fined for using foreign credentials unless they present themselves as chartered accountants when they are not.” I fully endorse that. We have to respect those citizens of Ontario and Canada.

It's my understanding that there are 30,000 chartered accountants in Ontario—In fact, every night I watch the Steve Paikin show when I can, and they sponsor his program, *The Agenda*. They always say that there are 30,000 chartered accountants in Ontario. There are about another 5,000 in the loop, studying. It's very rigorous. A lot of the individuals have to write the uniform final exam, the UFE, a couple of times to pass it. In fact, a cousin of mine who's now deceased, Pat O'Toole, was highly successful as a chartered accountant and had a business in Barrie and died a few years ago. I know how hard he worked and how intelligent he was.

This Friday—and this is sort of an invitation to the general public—at the Zante Restaurant in Bowmanville I'm having the accounting firm of Hobbs and Co. do an analysis of the Ontario budget, free of charge with no political spin on it.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Wayne Arthurs will be there.

Mr. John O'Toole: I hope Wayne comes, because Wayne is assistant to the Minister of Finance. If he has nothing better to do, then there mustn't be much in the budget.

I'm also doing one at 10:30 in the morning at Port Perry, and that is being done by Randy Keller, Keller & Associates, a chartered accountant from Port Perry, and I invite the people from anywhere, basically, to attend. The reason I do that is, I attend to see what the public is thinking about the budget.

In fairness, none of us here, except perhaps Mr. Arthurs from Scarborough-Pickering or whatever—he's the parliamentary assistant to finance, and I had that same job back some years ago—he may be privy to some of the things that are coming in here. I would hope that in the budget they have something for seniors. I say this with all sincerity. It is related to this, and I'll get back on track here shortly. The big thing is, I also hope that they do something for gas prices.

One of the suggestions I've put on the table is, they should offset—Madam Speaker, you know this as well. Gas today is about \$1 a litre, and of that, there's a flat tax, 14.7 cents, which is an ad valorem tax. It doesn't go up and down; it's 14.7 cents. So if gas was 50 cents a litre, it would still be 14.7 cents a litre for the government's revenue. If gas went to \$2, it would still be 14.7 cents a litre; it's not a percentage. If you look at a flat tax, 14.7 cents or a percentage, there's quite a difference; it's subtle—but they're going to apply 8% more on a tax. Now, this will garner them about \$1 billion in additional revenue by putting the tax on a tax, and it's unconscionable.

I think it should be challenged as a charter—I'm putting out this as the function of the accountants of this

province, and we should listen to them. They have a reception or an information thing tonight where we should actually be asking for them to comment on the fairness.

The reason this is being wrapped around is, I've had several forums for my constituents in the riding of Durham where I've listened to their concerns about the HST. These are not precipitating some sort of revolt or raising anxiety levels. They're open. I've spoken to three or four Rotary Clubs in Uxbridge, Port Perry, Oshawa in fact, as well as Bowmanville, and what I have done is, I've been giving out a booklet. You should look it up on the certified general accountants' website. There's a very good booklet which talks about the HST. It's quite fair-minded, but it does list—it's almost two pages of new items and services that we will be taxed.

People who have home services, have RSPs or get their income tax done, all of these things, these services by lawyers, accountants, physiotherapists and nutritionists will all be taxed. So if you're going to a physiotherapist after July 1, try to make a payment ahead of July 1 because it's going to cost you 8% more. If it's \$100, it will now be \$108. If you go every week that's \$8 more a week. There are 52 weeks; that's \$400 more in tax that you're going to pay for that service. Every time you get a statement from your accountant, there's going to be a little—you know, where they put the tax on there. Every time you do anything, getting gas, paying your Internet, you're going to pay 8% more. That's right out of your pocket.

In fact, we have it from accountants that I've spoken with, the only reason that they're doing the HST is this: They have a deficit. We understand that. There are more pressures as people are losing their jobs and companies are moving. It's tragic what's happening. Ontario is crumbling under the weight of the burdens of red tape, and with that, these people demand more social assistance and other programs. But here's the deal: They have a deficit, so to solve that deficit, they're increasing taxes. It's called HST.

Now, the CGAs that I talked to, as part of the audit they do, looking at business and personal things, are saying that there's about two more pages of items that will be taxed. So we need the integrity and transparency and accountability that's mentioned in this bill to be front and centre.

I honestly think that, for the most part, we're in agreement with the bill, as we've tried to point out. I also say that we're in a global economy, which is a fair comment. The global economy means that you could actually get your accounting done in India, Bolivia, Austria or Switzerland.

In fact, for the record, I'm not mentioning names. My daughter and future son-in-law—he's a securities lawyer in the Isle of Man. They do transactions all over the world. So this is not revolutionary here. This is not something beyond comprehension. What's missing is a vision for all the professional designations to get together to recognize or provide a process for validating their credentials before they come to Canada.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I thought you were going to talk about a Swiss bank account.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, you know, in the global economy, in the context we're talking about, these accountant functions and the rigours and disciplines, especially as mentioned—and I think this is important to mention. These are self-regulatory organizations or professions and, as such, they spend a fair amount of the language in this 86-page bill dealing with such things as memberships, prohibitions, complaints and disciplines, bankruptcies and insolvencies, practice inspections, capacity, investigations and inspection powers, custodial responsibilities, miscellaneous provisions, bylaws, transitional issues—we're getting to the legislation framework we have now, as well as looking backwards. Liabilities, for instance: Audits that were done on corporation filings, like Bre-X and those kinds of filings, that were done with falsified securities or misrepresentations of financial order in the business will retroactively be liable. It's my understanding that this will hold them to account as long as they shall live. So that it will certainly encourage them to do as much due diligence as possible.

1750

I'm just going to read, because of the time allowed here, a couple of sections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You've still got 18 minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not going to have enough time really to get to the bottom of this and really move it forward. It's going to be difficult.

Let's just look at this one provision here, investigations and inspection powers, which, under the CGAs, is sections 50 to 54. That's where the real detail is. It says that the act provides for the appointment of investigators—appointment. Who would be appointing them? I hope they're not orders in council, because they might be some of the political people, which would not be good. It provides appointments for investigators and inspectors to conduct investigations and inspections under the act and sets out their powers. Who's going to outline these powers? This will all be done in regulation, and that's where the devil is in the details. If these are political appointments, I'm not for it at all. If we want it clear and transparent, we need to have qualified people who have earned the respect of their profession to go in and do the audit, as they do with the medical exams—what do they call it? Mr. Wilson from Simcoe-Grey: What do they call the oversight with the College of Physicians and Surgeons? They must have a medical examiner, people who go around and do audits, medical audits. You're a former Minister of Health. They look into these violations or infringements of practices.

I would only say that the question I need answered when it comes down to this committee is: Who appoints these inspectors and investigators and who sets out the powers? It will be done, I hope, in consultation with the profession itself. But that's the detail.

In the face of it all, doctors or other professions carry insurance against liabilities of failure, or errors and

omissions insurance. Any deliberate intent, of course, would be, I think, sort of a criminal charge, probably, if they falsified, deliberately and knowingly, things, as we've seen under Bernie Madoff and those kinds of characters in the United States who have been prosecuted.

This is important. Let's not trivialize it. Let's recognize that it is going to committee. We haven't got the full job done. The three organizations aren't harmoniously organized with other provinces, as I understand. Ontario would be the last place in Canada right now to be giving anybody advice. When you look at the deficit they're running—and they're raising the taxes again. They've doubled the spending, almost. Unbelievable. We should be calling on these audit groups, all three of them, to come in here and—Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General for the province of Ontario, does a report every year—an excellent, professional example of an independent officer of the Legislature. We need more people like him. At the same time, this government is going to fire the Ombudsman and they're going to fire the Environmental Commissioner. To me, these are the very people we need when the going gets tough. You need to hold people's feet to the fire.

I think the accountants have earned that respect and reputation on all sides of the House. They're the right people at the right time to do the right job. I call on them to work in co-operation with our leader, Tim Hudak, our critic, Mr. Chudleigh, and our finance critic, Norm Miller. We will go along with most of this stuff. We'll be there at the committees. We'll be making sure we get it right. We'll be making sure the Attorney General doesn't try to skate around—some of these appointments, we don't want them to be political; we want them to be professional, competent, qualified people to make Ontario a stronger province for us, our families, our children, including the pages here today.

Madam Speaker, there isn't enough time to bring more clarity to this bill, so with that—I'm leaving quite a bit of time left—with your indulgence, I'll stop now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend Mr. O'Toole from Durham for his concerns and his knowledge of the accounting practice.

I can say that, from the three Canadian accounting bodies' perspective, the act appears to be an effective housekeeping update of the three accounting bodies' governing statutes. The bill, in our opinion, clarifies the authority of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario to govern their members while attempting to increase accountability to the public for their work. For the CGAs and CMAs, the bill is essentially a housekeeping bill.

This has been an ongoing problem for years, with the three groups pitted against each other for, maybe, jurisdiction; for the limits to which they are allowed to practise in the province. I think this clarifies it a lot better. It brings it into line with accounting practices in

other jurisdictions. I feel that this bill is a decent bill that will help clarify the problems that the three groups have had with each other. I think they're all on board for this, from what I can see.

I hope this will move ahead quickly, and the NDP will be supporting Bill 158.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It was, as always, entertaining to hear the comments from the member for Durham. One wonders whether you should comment on the parts of his speech that were off-topic or the parts that were on-topic. But when it really comes down to it, I kind of like the member from Durham. He's an interesting guy with actually a background in this, so I'm a little disappointed that he didn't dwell in greater detail upon his great depth of experience in the business world, in which he actually could have provided us a little bit of enlightenment.

But let's go back to what the bill is all about. As my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek pointed out rather ably, this is a housekeeping bill that enables all three major accounting bodies—the chartered accountants; the CGAs, the certified general accountants; and the CMAs, the certified management accountants—to, in effect, bring into line their various acts, and to make all of them public and enable each of them to have a modern, accountable and transparent set of rules that enables them, as accounting bodies, to meet their responsibilities to their members, the public and the businesses that they serve, and to do so in a manner befitting 21st-century professions.

It has been my great pleasure over the years to have had a career that, at various times, intertwined with the accounting profession in various places for various reasons. I've always found them a delight to deal with. I have found that when they ask for advice, they generally take it. I've found that their leadership—of all of the bodies—has been enlightened. This, I think, shows that all three bodies have worked together and gotten their act together, and this is good for Ontario in general.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Halton, the critic for the official opposition, and the always hard-working member from Durham, who I think has set some sort of record for the number of speeches he has made on just about every bill that comes before this Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Never at a loss for words, Norm.

Mr. Norm Miller: Never at a loss for words. In fact, I'm surprised he didn't use all his time and go right through until 6 o'clock this evening. But he has, of course, a broad base of knowledge on so many different topics.

As it turns out, the certified general accountants are having a reception and day at Queen's Park today, so I did actually go down and try to get some feedback from them on how they feel about Bill 158. Basically, they're all in favour of it, with perhaps some very minor

amendments they'd like to see at committee. Our party, I'm sure, will be supporting this bill and helping it to speed through the Legislature, after it gets through second reading and then goes to committee. I know that our members will take an interest in it at committee and make sure that we hear from the various accounting organizations—the certified management accountants, the CAs and the CGAs—at committee.

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments or questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the speech from the member for Durham. Those of you who know the history of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador will recall that at one time they had what they called a narrow-gauge railroad. The train would take off from St. John's and go up hills and down valleys and around rivers and lakes, eventually ending up in the community of Cornerbrook. That was a little like the speech from the member from Durham today. It went up hills, down valleys, around lakes, through creeks, and eventually got to the point where he wanted to be in supporting Bill 158, the act to change the accountants act in the province of Ontario.

I fundamentally respect the member from Durham. Madam Speaker, as you may know, he was born and raised in Peterborough and as a young man left Peterborough to seek his fortune in General Motors, where he spent a long time in various capacities in that organization. He knows the accounting area extremely well from his businesses and he certainly added a few comments.

He indicated that he's having a non-partisan event this Friday in Bowmanville—perhaps I'll get a chance to take it in—to hear those accountants provide their overview of the very important budget that Minister Duncan will deliver at 4 p.m. this Thursday. We certainly wait for that budget to be presented, acknowledging that Ontario in the last number of months has gone through some real economic challenges. It will be the opportunity for the minister to show his leadership and how, over the next period of time, we'll get Ontario back in a balanced budget position, which is something I believe all Ontarians are asking us to do. It will be a credible plan and we look forward to this Thursday.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I appreciate all the members who have commented and I look forward to this legislation going to committee, and some of the suggestions that the member from Halton and myself have made and others—our leader, Tim Hudak, has encouraged us to do the right thing in this important function of audit and accounting in Ontario, and make it strong and transparent, as has been said. I believe that the input today was worthwhile.

With that, Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): On March 11, pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills gave notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning the transfer of staff from the Ontario Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: In question period on March 11, I asked the government a very simple question. I wanted to know why this government is awarding tax collectors who are moving from the provincial Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency with a six-month severance package, in some cases, even though they may possibly continue to work in the same office and most certainly will not miss a day of work or a day of pay. Essentially, the McGuinty government will pay them up to \$45,000 to change their business cards.

In responding to my supplementary question on that same day, March 11, the Minister of Finance, who was the Acting Premier that same day, gave an answer that was completely unsatisfactory to me and to taxpayers across the province. The minister claimed that tax collectors stand to be handed up to \$45,000 in severance without missing a single day of work because, "The Conservative government introduced that clause into the collective agreement." If he was referring to our present federal Conservative government, as I had initially thought, this statement would have been totally false. This was the reason for my request in the late show. If, however, the minister was referring to a Progressive Conservative provincial government in office in the 1960s, let's say, he may in fact have a point, although, at best, his statement would represent a half truth.

But is this minister really suggesting that his own government's decision to harmonize the PST and the GST is the fault of Premier John Robarts? And even if severance obligations were in fact negotiated in 1970, some 40 years ago, would the minister blame one of our historically great provincial leaders for not envisioning that a future Ontario Premier would break his promises on taxes and harmonize the provincial sales tax with the GST? How absurd would that be?

In fact, the collective agreement that this minister is apparently so determined to defend was intended to protect workers who are losing their jobs. In this case, not a single job will be lost. The minister has only

himself and his government to blame for this mess. If the minister had read the news following my question or listened to the radio, he would know that taxpayers are very upset. They're watching this government fritter away their hard-earned tax dollars so carelessly and without consideration to the context of hardship now affecting so many in our province. The minister's answer failed to even make reference to that reality, just as it failed to assume responsibility for its new sales tax policy, which, of course, is at the root of this problem and created the problem in the first place.

Did this government even bother trying to follow the lead of British Columbia and stop these kinds of outrageous severance payments? Did it even bother trying to negotiate a fair deal for Ontario taxpayers? These are also legitimate questions. All indications are that the government didn't. If it had done so, I'm certain we would have heard about it.

Because the minister apparently sees no problem with his tax collector severance payments, I want to show why the people of Ontario most certainly do see a problem here.

Satinder Chera of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote the following: "As we have seen with some of the major financial institutions south of the border, unreasonably big buyouts only serve to undermine confidence in our public institutions. That our elected officials have to admit that there is anything wrong with paying severance when no jobs are being lost only demonstrates their contempt for average taxpayers and diminishes our hope for the future."

The National Post in an editorial on this issue gave the government an ominous warning: "The next time Ontarians go to the polls, they should remember exactly whom the Liberal government is looking out for—and cast their votes accordingly."

This is from the Waterloo Region Record: "The revelation of this clause damages the reputation of both public employees and their unions. Many Ontarians who have recently lost their jobs will be angered that the government is spending their money in this manner."

Even the Toronto Star, traditionally sympathetic to all things Liberal, featured the issue as its main front-page story on the March 12.

In his response, I hope that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance will simply acknowledge three incontrovertible facts: first, that people do, in fact, care about this issue—when this government wastes taxpayers' money, especially in this difficult economic environment, it matters to them; second, that this government's own policy, its own conscious and deliberate decision, not a previous government's of more than 40 years ago, is responsible for this payout; third, that this government failed to do what it could have done and fight, just once, for Ontario's taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

Let me start, if I can, with just acknowledging his comments in respect to severances as part of negotiated agreements set in place by previous governments, including governments of 30 and 40 years ago. Our government honours those agreements. We honour the contractual agreements we have with our employees. That has not always been the case in Ontario, and it wasn't that long ago that governments didn't extend the same courtesies to its employees.

1810

We will reduce our head count within the Ontario public service. This will help us reduce our Ontario public service by a portion of that 5% we're seeking. It will save the Ontario taxpayer \$100 million a year.

But as part of the whole package of tax reform, we did work with the federal government to ensure that those Ontario employees who would lose their jobs with the Ontario government would have an opportunity for employment with the federal government. They are two different governments, a provincial government and a federal government. It's kind of like moving from the Royal Bank to the CIBC. If you leave the Royal Bank and you're entitled to a severance by an agreement you have contractually, you get that severance even if you go to work for the Bank of Commerce subsequently. There really is no distinction between us as a provincial government and our employees, and our obligation to them as part of their negotiated contract to honour those contracts.

I would be surprised if members in this House were to really stand up and say, "What we want you to do is not honour the agreement you have with the public service in this province who do such great work for us." Many of those employees who will be moving to other employment with the federal government will have many years of service in the province of Ontario. They will have served us well. Not to have honoured their contracts would have spoken very badly about government but, also, quite frankly, would have jeopardized any number of activities we're involved in. It certainly would have jeopardized our relationship with our unions, to say the very least.

There are some 1,250 positions which will be impacted by the wind-down of the retail sales tax and the move to the HST. The HST is a federal tax; it's not a provincial tax. They will remit to us our portion of that tax. They will administer the tax. They will manage the tax. They will have the employees who will help them do that. Many of those employees will have been provincial employees until the point where they take on new employment as a result of job offers from the federal government.

We set out this plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario. We have undertaken through this plan, effective July 1 with the HST, to lower taxes, which has already begun with personal income tax. There will be lower corporate taxes. There will be costs related to the HST no doubt, but we set out a strategy to lower taxes in the province, to create a more competitive environment in

this province and create jobs at a time we desperately need them. We expect over the next number of years to see hundreds of thousands of jobs created here in province of Ontario.

Jack Mintz has suggested in his work that up to 600,000 jobs will be created in the next 10 years. We need to take decisive action. Part of that decisive action was this tax plan, including the implementation of the HST. With that implementation, we no longer need, in the employ of the province of Ontario, those 1,250 employees. Those employees have years of service—some many years of service—and their contractual agreements with us entitle them to a payment of a severance.

We're going to honour that obligation to those employees as we undertake to honour our obligations to all of the 60,000-odd employees in the province of Ontario under our responsibility. They will be working for a new employer: the federal government. They will go there without seniority, and the severance packages that they might have been entitled to if they had been federal employees from day one—they'll have to gain that. They'll have to earn that over time. This provides an opportunity for new employment while we reduce our workforce and fulfill our obligations.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: As the MPP for the riding of Durham and a former local and regional member of council in the region of Durham, I consider it my privilege and my duty to work with and speak up for the other partners in a municipality and the regional municipality of Durham. In fact, that is the whole point of this question after the sessional day today.

Yesterday, Monday, March 22, there was an article which I will report here. It was entitled "Durham's Planning War." It was in the Toronto Star. The article made a very disparaging case of what I think is kind of a half-hearted approach by the ministry to deal with some very hard work done by the region of Durham staff.

This whole process was in response to a report on the Durham regional official plan, which was adopted on June 3, 2009. This is quite typical of the process that occurs working through approaches, recommendations and actions or responses by the ministry, working with the local staff, as they've done with the amalgamation of York region, as they've done with the city of Hamilton and other areas where there have been official plans submitted. What is different here—and this is really the point and the insulting part of this—as I said, they submitted the plan, after two years of experts and non-politicians for the most part, to the Minister of Municipal

Affairs. So when I saw that report disparaging the work done over two years prior to that submission, I questioned the minister today, and his response was most unsatisfactory, to put it respectfully.

The response from the ministry was received March 12, nine months after the submission had been made. Two years of work; submit the report in June; March 2010, we get the response. The response is most undignified and highly dismissive of the serious work that had been done.

Here's the real point: In all other cases, the public optics on this are completely out of style. In other areas that were done in Barrie and in Hamilton, as I said, these disagreements and discussions and contributions back and forth were done at the staff level. There was no posting or press release. However, in Durham's case, the provincial response was a press release immediately as well as this very, very critical memo of the work done by the regional staff. That's what's at play here. Why the difference? Why is so much attention being paid to this?

What I am most concerned about, as well, is the conformance, amendment 128, requested by the region. They had three or four meetings prior to this submission, and this letter dismisses all of those staff-level meetings. It looks almost like political intervention. Normally there would be an exchange, a give and take, a to and fro on both parts, designated with methodology.

What's really at stake here is that Durham region, in the growth plan, the Places to Grow document, was shortchanged on the number of jobs. The region of Durham is a growing, thriving community. There are economic pressures with the changes in the auto sector. But what has happened here is their plan looked at the guidelines of the province and the Seaton land and other project plans that were out there, and what it did is it looked at the Seaton plan, which was the forecast growth plan up to 2031. They made some recommendations in amendment which resulted in an additional 25,000 jobs. That's up from 350,000 jobs initially to 375,000 jobs by 2031. And they know the area. The director of planning and the staff know the area. Here are some civil servants who have never been to the region, sitting in Toronto and criticizing this plan, only to deny Durham region and the work of the staff and the citizens that went together to create 25,000 additional jobs. They were turned down cold in a press release. It looked to me like it was political intervention at the least and, to me, malicious in the outcome of the work that was done by the professional planners in the region of Durham.

I am dismissive of the response today, and I look for some more clarification.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to be here tonight. We normally don't stay after 6 o'clock, but it is a pleasure.

To make some comments to the member from Durham—because I know he cares about his community and I respect him for that. But I just want to say that the

true meaning of the statement—that was yesterday and today is today.

You know, I was here during question period today when the member posed the question to the minister, and the preamble to the question was the fact that this government is not listening; it's not working with the local municipalities to achieve certain goals. Well, I know the member was here—he was elected, I believe in 1995—during the amalgamation extravaganza that the former government embarked on. I remember one particular AMO convention here in Toronto when the then-Minister of Municipal Affairs instructed the city of Toronto that they'd better get their act together, because he was going to amalgamate them. I was at that time reeve of a municipality, the small, rural municipality of Brighton township, and the whole county's mayors and Reeves who were at the convention convened a quick meeting at the Harbour Castle hotel. They were all scared to know when, because—and I believe it was Minister Stockwell at the time? No.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Al Leach, wasn't it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Al Leach? Well, one of them. I don't want to quote a name, because I could be wrong. So that hasn't happened since then. That's when there was no respect for the municipalities.

To talk about the Durham region OP, I was very fortunate to be parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure during the days of discussion when we formed government in 2003—then-Minister Caplan. I'm delighted to say that I played a significant role as parliamentary assistant in the whole greater Golden Horseshoe plan. This wasn't something that this government brought forward; this was actually started by the NDP government in 1990, followed by a lot of consultation; I remember being on municipal council when the Conservative government was in power and carried on

those discussions. I guess we brought, although they used different names, the product as a finished product: the greater Golden Horseshoe plan.

I remember travelling across the greater Golden Horseshoe region and beyond in consultation. It was probably one of our most extensive pieces of legislation. I heard over and over again from those municipal leaders, those planners across the region—and I probably attended a good majority of those consultations and open houses with Minister Caplan—that that was something that municipalities were asking for: leadership within the province to come up with a long-term strategy for some regional planning. Because frankly, I know from being mayor and a member of council for our small municipality in Northumberland county, we all tended to do our own thing. We forgot sometimes that we had neighbours next door who had the same network of roads and bridges we shared. Sometimes there was very little consultation.

So to say that Durham region was not well-consulted or represented I think is not correct. On this proposal that Durham region put forward, in my understanding, there's not unanimous consent from regional council. I know we have to respect democracy and the majority gets their wish, but I can tell you and you know that sometimes when we travel the stretch of 401 across the city of Toronto—I remember when it was two lanes. I remember some farmers' fields. I hear people comment: "I wish better planning was done." Well, I think that's what the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe talked about, and I think it's our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1824.

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Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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 Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	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
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cookville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	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, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
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	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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 Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
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 Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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 Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

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

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

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

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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