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Monday 19 April 2010

Lundi 19 avril 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 avril 2010

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: It's with pleasure that I rise today to introduce Tara Leithead and her parents and family who are here today. Tara is the team leader for the pages today. Iain Leithead, Tara's father, is here; Cindy Holovac Leithead, her mom; Gregor Leithead, Tara's brother; and Suzanne Weaver is here, Tara's sister, with her two children, Thea and Reagan. We invite them to enjoy the proceedings this morning.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It's my pleasure to introduce Jim and Linda Finkbeiner, who are here watching question period today. Welcome.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce my daughter Natasha, sitting in the west members' gallery, visiting us from Whitehorse.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'd like to introduce, visiting us from Vermilion Bay, the parents of page Zachery Lang. His parents are Debbie and Karl Lang; also, his sister Emma, who is celebrating her 11th birthday today; and finally, Zach's uncle and aunt from Oakville, Len and Lynda Currie. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome the medical students who are here today at Queen's Park for the OMA's medical student day. There are five students here that attend Western medical school: Dalal Dahrouj, Caitlin Symonette, Tony Di Labio, Charles Ho and Sandeep Dhaliwal. Welcome to all of our future doctors.

M^{me} Andrea Horwath: Je souligne la visite à Queen's Park de JoAnne Bellehumeur et la classe de cinquième année de l'école Monseigneur-de-Laval, située dans ma circonscription de Hamilton Centre. Je leur souhaite la bienvenue.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Laura Burke from the great community of Corbeil, Ontario in my riding is here with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I'd like to welcome her as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Oxford and page Kyle Rutherford, to welcome his mother, Carolyn Rutherford; his sister Jenna Rutherford; and his aunt

Marilynn Vandendorre, to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the Consul General of Switzerland here in Toronto, Mrs. Bernadette Hunkeler Brown. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Tuesday, March 30, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, raised a point of privilege concerning a statutory requirement in the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, that a legislative committee undertake a review of that act within the stated period of time. Specifically, subsection 39(1) states:

“A committee of the Legislative Assembly shall,

“(a) begin a comprehensive review of this act and the regulations made under it no earlier than three years and no later than four years after this act receives royal assent; and

“(b) within one year after beginning that review, make recommendations to the assembly concerning amendments to this act and the regulations made under it.”

The deadline for the commencement of the legislative committee review was March 28 of this year, four years to the day that the act received royal assent. The member for Whitby–Oshawa contended in the first instance that the failure of the government to take the necessary steps to enable a legislative committee to carry out the required review amounts to a contemptuous flouting of the oversight role of the Legislative Assembly. Secondly, the member further contended that the provision in the budget bill currently before the House, Bill 16, to repeal and replace clause 39(1)(a) of the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, and thereby defer the statutory requirements of the review of the act, was likewise contemptuous of the Legislative Assembly, particularly because the provision would have a retroactive effect.

The government House leader, Ms. Smith, responded to the point of privilege and later wrote to me to bolster her contention that the existence of Bill 16 and its introduction to the House before March 28, 2010, was indicative of the government's proactive effort to ensure that there would not be non-compliance with a statutory provision. She further argues that even if there is an issue with the current situation, such issue would be purged by the eventual passage of the amendment, if and when that occurs, since the legal framework would ultimately con-

tain no gap during which the required review of the act remained unstarted and incomplete.

The third party House leader, Mr. Kormos, contends that the government House leader's comments revealed not only foreknowledge that the provision in the statute would not be complied with, but also an effort by the government to frustrate the required review. According to the member, this aggravated rather than bolstered the government House leader's position.

In reviewing the matter, I was first of all influenced by Speakers' rulings, including some of my own, in which Speakers have consistently declined to deal with legal issues or become involved in the interpretation of the law. To the extent that this point of privilege revolves around such a legal issue, the Speaker is simply not in a position to interpret a statutory requirement as found in subsection 39(1) of the act or to consider the legal ramifications presented by the assembly's ostensible non-compliance with a statutory requirement. Moreover, while I note that commencement clauses in bills providing for the retroactive coming into force of all or part of a bill is not at all an uncommon feature of legislation, their legal orderliness is beyond the jurisdiction of the Speaker to consider.

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However, in the case at hand, it is not the legal question that is at issue. There is no dispute between parties that the statutorily required review of the act by a legislative committee has not been set in motion by the date mandated in the act. Additionally, though the government House leader defends the government partly on legal grounds, the member for Whitby–Oshawa did not base her contempt argument on such a legal interpretation.

The member contends that the government's failure to take the steps necessary to bring the House into compliance with the existing law, and its introduction of legislation to set aside the requirement in any event, amounts to a contempt of the House because these actions deprived the House of part of its role to oversee the government of the day.

The member supported her argument by referring to rulings in the Canadian House of Commons by Speaker Sauvé and Speaker Fraser, and to a 1997 ruling in this House by Speaker Stockwell.

It is worthwhile to consider what constitutes a contempt of the House. As is noted in House of Commons Procedure and Practice:

“Any conduct which offends the authority or dignity of the House, even though no breach of any specific privilege may have been committed, is referred to as a contempt of the House. Contempt may be an act or an omission. It does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member; it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results....

“Contempts, as opposed to ‘privileges,’ cannot be enumerated or categorized. As Speaker Sauvé explained in a 1980 ruling: ‘... while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the

House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred.’

“Just as it is not possible to categorize or to delineate what may fall under the definition of contempt, it is not even possible to categorize the ‘severity’ of contempt. Contempts may vary greatly in their gravity; matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts.”

The government House leader has described the steps the government took, before the arrival of the date mandated in the act, to change the statutory provision and how, once Bill 16 is passed, the new provision will retroactively have the effect of erasing what might be called the “limbo period” since March 28. How can the House be out of compliance with a legal requirement that will not exist if Bill 16 becomes law and comes into force? So goes, in effect, the argue of the government House leader.

The member for Whitby–Oshawa referred to Speaker Stockwell's January 22, 1997, ruling, where he found a prima facie case of contempt was established with respect to government advertisements that he found conveyed the impression “that the assembly and the Legislature had a pro forma, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and lawmaking process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House.”

A similar level of disrespect of the institution of Parliament was found by Speaker Fraser in the House of Commons on April 19, 1993. On that occasion, the Speaker ruled concerning the failure of the government of Canada to table in the House of Commons an order in council that was required by statute to be tabled by a specific date. As this was the second occurrence of this same failure, about which the government had been previously warned, the Speaker found a prima facie case of contempt had been established.

Does the current situation rise to this level? Does the failure of this Legislature—or more precisely, the persons in responsible leadership of it—to put itself in compliance with the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, by whatever means one might normally expect this to occur, constitute a contemptuous disregard of this Legislature by the government?

The provision in the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, for a committee review was not some secretive or obscure provision, nor was it recent. The government would or should have known about the approaching deadline and could easily have taken the necessary steps to deal with this well before now. The government should have done so much earlier.

But does this amount to a contempt of the House? In comparisons with the situations ruled on by Speakers Stockwell and Fraser that I just cited, I do not find that the matter raised by the member for Whitby–Oshawa represents either a flagrant or disdainful dismissal of the role of the Legislature, intended to diminish or devalue this institution, nor is it a swift repetition of the trans-

gressions about which the government has relatively recently been warned.

The Speaker does not control the government's agenda, nor can the Speaker compel a motion or any other kind of business to be brought before the House for decision. I will say, though, that a bit more advance deference to the House, and outside of an omnibus bill, would have been a far more preferable way to have this dealt with. But it is still the case that the consent of the Legislature must be secured before the change of the act can be made. As well, notice to the Legislature of the intended change was given in advance of the deadline date by way of amending legislation. I cannot find, therefore, that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been made out.

However, I do think that this matter deserves some more serious consideration. Despite the existence of Bill 16 and its provision to repeal and replace the LHIN review process, this House is nevertheless, right at this moment, seemingly not in compliance with the statute.

This is not the only such occurrence. For instance, subsection 76(5) of the Commodity Futures Act requires a legislative committee to review the report of the Ontario Commodity Futures Act advisory committee. The report was issued in 2007, and while a standing committee was assigned an order of reference to conduct the review, this was interrupted by the dissolution of the House before the committee devoted a single meeting to the issue. The review was never renewed and, to this day, a provision of that act remains unfulfilled.

Frankly, the purpose of these types of provisions baffles me. When the House passes legislation that embeds a statutory required future review by a legislative committee, the House is in effect ordering itself to do some subsequent thing, something which it already has the full power to do any time. Such provisions seem superfluous, especially when they go unobserved by the very body that mandated them in the first place. They are a recipe precisely for the type of complaint raised by the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Furthermore, in the face of such a self-made prior order, when the House itself fails to comply, what is to be made of such lack of diligence, discipline and rigor?

Specifically to the point raised by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, taken to its logical conclusion, is the House in contempt of itself in such a scenario? It certainly won't be this Speaker who tries to make that case, but I don't think it is wise to be casual about this kind of thing. It causes me great concern, and I therefore will be writing to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 108(g), to ask the committee to consider this issue and to provide me and the House with advice on the potential for procedural remedies that might assist in these situations in the future.

In closing, I thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa, the government House leader and the third party leader for their contributions.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd just like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your very thoughtful and thorough consideration of these matters.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO POWER AUTHORITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: In a speech to the Toronto Board of Trade in 2005, the inaugural CEO of the Ontario Power Authority said, "I consider the OPA to be a transitional entity. For those of you who are worried about big bureaucracies, that sounds good."

Premier, if this was the case, why has your so-called transitional agency swollen from 15 employees to 300 in just five short years?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to respond to the question. I can understand why the Leader of the Opposition and his party wouldn't know about the importance of planning the system, planning the new generation that's necessary to provide the power that our economy needs and to provide the power that our consumers need, in terms of their quality of life.

The role of the Ontario Power Authority is to do that planning. It's important work; it's complex work. You're dealing with multi-billions of dollars in terms of infrastructure investment. It requires a great deal of expertise, expertise that the previous government lacked because they didn't have a plan.

We continue to rely on the Ontario Power Authority to provide the excellent advice that they provide to us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister: Clearly, you obviously have no plan or you keep changing your plan. Fifteen staff members have bloated to some 300 in five years. Your government's promise that this would be a transitional, virtual agency has become quite the opposite.

As you know, many commentators on the energy file are noting that your agencies are "doing much less for a lot more money than they used to," or "a great source of high-wage jobs and rising salaries, but their actual productivity is declining."

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Ontario families are very concerned about this. They found out this past week that their energy bills are going up some \$350 a year on average, but now we see the number of bureaucrats at your OPA balloon significantly. Minister, are you going to get it back to its original mandate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Power Authority is a transition agency. The transition we're talking about, however, is the transition away from the old way of doing things under the previous government, where there

weren't plans in place to deal with the amount of generation we needed; and where there was energy generation, it relied entirely on coal. We are transitioning the energy sector in this province away from dirty coal to cleaner and greener sources of energy.

Let me give you an example. When the honourable member was in cabinet between 1995 and 2003, coal-fired generation went up 127%, and CO₂ emissions increased by 124% over that same period. Under us, so far we've been able to reduce that by 33%. By—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, Minister, the only thing you seem to be planning, when it comes to the OPA, is how to transition from being lean to bloated and growing each and every year. Look at the \$100,000-salary list for the OPA. It went from six executives earning \$1.5 million in 2005 to 75 people who earn over \$11.5 million today.

As the minister knows, as part of the Ontario PC plan, 10for2010.ca, we're calling for a sunset review to assess how much value these kinds of transitional agencies are offering Ontario families. But what they're seeing is the bureaucracy growing and, in return, their hydro bills up \$350 a year.

Minister, will you support a sunset review for the OPA?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think Ontarians are looking for hope for the future in terms of energy generation sustainability to ensure that the energy we're creating is not harming our children, and potentially our grandchildren, and they're looking for reliability.

The system we inherited when we came into office did not offer either of those. We've had to make some tough choices, and we're relying on the Ontario Power Authority to give us advice and help us transition our energy sector through these tough times.

These are tough decisions that your government failed to make. You did not have the courage to make these decisions when you were in office. On behalf of Ontarians and the future of their children and grandchildren, we have the courage to make these decisions. We will provide a more sustainable energy sector and, indeed, a more reliable energy sector—

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

ONTARIO POWER AUTHORITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Quite frankly, Premier, to you and your energy minister, there is no courage in allowing a bureaucracy to bloat from 15 to 300 employees; there is no courage in allowing energy rates to skyrocket in the province of Ontario.

Premier, let me see if you will answer my next question.

We've seen that bureaucracy increase from 15 to 300 employees. We've seen the number of \$100,000-or-more-a-year employees skyrocket. We've seen Ontario

families' energy bills increase significantly. If the bureaucracy at the OPA was expanding by leaps and bounds, why do they spend \$56 million on consultant contracts on top of that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've made it very clear to all our energy partners that they must do everything within their power to ensure that our ratepayers are getting value for money, and we will not yield in our efforts to ensure that that is indeed happening.

At the same time, we know that you oppose our efforts to try to build a more reliable energy sector. But consumers need to know that the energy will be there when they need it; our economy needs to know that that energy will be there when we need it.

We recognize that you may oppose the decisions that need to be made today to ensure that that takes place, which means you oppose the investments we need to make in modernizing our nuclear fleet; you oppose the investments we need to make in moving away from coal to cleaner, greener renewable energy; you oppose the investments and—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister: Do you know what? You're right. We oppose the growth of this bureaucracy from 15 to 300 employees and a \$350 increase in bills for Ontario's seniors and working families that they cannot afford in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

I'll say to you, Minister, that millions of dollars were handed out in sweetheart contracts to consultants, even though the executive salaries at the OPA, a so-called transitional bureaucracy, grew by over 1,000% under Dalton McGuinty's watch, and its overall size ballooned by some 1,900%. Minister, given those staggering figures, what was left for these consultants to actually do?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Nothing is more important to us than ensuring that all of our energy partners ensure that our ratepayers are getting value for money.

That being said, they have an important job to do on behalf of ourselves and on behalf of the people of Ontario, and that's cleaning up after the mess that you left behind. Nobody can say that the old Ontario Hydro was operating at maximum efficiency. Nobody ever made that claim when you were in power, so we've had to transition the entire energy sector toward getting better results, toward building better opportunities in terms of energy generation.

The day has finally come when, in the short term, we have enough energy generation to get us through the next number of years. That wasn't the case when you were in office.

We're now planning for the long—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll try back to the Premier. The Premier passed on the first five questions; I'll try number six.

Premier, according to public accounts, your bloated OPA spent a staggering \$56 million on consultants, even though it had a runaway payroll in high-priced bureaucrats. The problem is that we have no insight into these sweetheart consulting deals. What did ratepayers get in return, aside from bills going up some \$350 on average?

We've brought forward a plan, Premier, that would see all contracts of \$10,000 or more signed by provincial public bodies posted online, to turn every Ontario family and ratepayer into a watchdog on their provincial government to see if they are getting value for this runaway spending at the OPA. Premier, will you support our plan to increase transparency and post these contracts online?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What the member opposite refers to as runaway spending is investment in our nuclear generation: refurbishing our nuclear units, working toward a rebuild, a new build. It's investment in renewables to ensure that we move away from coal to cleaner, greener sources of energy.

The lecture we're getting here is a little bit rich when it comes to their record in office. Let me just remind—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me just remind the Legislature about their record in office when OPG and Hydro One were in place and the Tories gave over \$10 million to help their key friends.

Do you remember Tom Long and the \$2.3 million that he received; Deb Hutton and the \$250,000-per-year job she had at Hydro One as senior vice-president; Paul Rhodes and the million dollars he had; Mike Harris, with over \$18,000 as a consultant after he served as Premier; Leslie Noble—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. I want to start by wishing him a happy Earth Week.

A recent report by the Pembina Institute shows that transit is key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario, but they have words of caution. Transportation systems "are particularly vulnerable to funding cuts that could stop or seriously delay potential GHG reductions."

We know the impact that the Premier's transit letdown has on transit riders across the GTA, but can the Premier tell Ontarians and Ontario families what this cut means for Ontario's climate change targets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I'll just take the opportunity to commend the folks at Pembina. They do some fabulous work for us, and I think they have issued an appropriate caution when it comes to these kinds of public policy initiatives.

But again, I'm not sure I can do more than what I've already said in terms of reminding my honourable colleague and Ontarians about the dramatic investments that we have, in fact, made in public transit: \$9.3 billion since

2003, which represents \$9.3 billion more than the previous government.

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When our revenues were affected by the recession, we decided it was important for us to make some adjustments. When you're sitting in opposition, you feel no adjustments are necessary, but when you're visited by the responsibilities of government, you know you've got to make some adjustments. We decided to stretch out our investment in public transit. It's not a cut; it's just a matter of investing over an extended period of time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Funding Transit City was a big part of the government's climate change plan. Transportation is, after all, the single largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. But the government has admitted it's not even close to meeting its own climate change targets, and the budget cuts will only keep more people waiting in gridlock.

Why can't the Premier tell Ontario families what this transit cut means for Ontario's greenhouse gas targets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I remember having conversations with Mayor Miller about this in our determination to find a way to work together.

Historically, the provincial government has not fully funded these kinds of initiatives, but we decided that we were going to take on that responsibility. We thought it was the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances.

Circumstances have changed somewhat. We are affected by this recession, as you well know. We decided that we had to extend the period of time over which we were making these investments—and I'll be honest about that: There are some downsides associated with that. We just can't move as quickly as we would have liked.

What we said to Ontarians is that we will not be making cuts to their hospitals, to their nurses, to their doctors. Instead, we will extend the period of time over which we invest in their public transit.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what the Premier said in June 2007, after promising to fund Transit City: "This project will remove 300 million car trips off our roads. And that's good news for the air we breathe—and the fight against climate change we're waging together."

Even before the transit cuts, the government admitted that it is almost 50% off its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets—already, before the cut.

The Premier's transit cut is bad news. It's bad news for the economy, bad news for commuters who are waiting at bus stops and bad news for the air that we breathe.

Will the Premier use Earth Week to make amends and reverse his \$4-billion cut to Transit City?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is admittedly an important connection between public transit and greenhouse gas reductions, and we're going to move as quickly as we can to make those investments and get them done.

We are investing, as we speak, \$870 million to extend the TTC subway to York region. Work has already start-

ed on the Sheppard LRT. We put over \$700 million for new TTC hybrid buses, subway cars, track repairs and improvements, and on and on.

We're also very proud of the fact that when it comes to GHG emissions from our coal-fired generation, they are at the lowest point they've been in some 45 years. The single greatest source of GHGs in Canada comes from our coal-fired generation in Ontario, and as you know, we have a specific commitment to eliminate those entirely.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier as well.

The cost of electricity seems to be climbing with each passing day, and the Premier's unfair sales tax will make it a lot worse. The HST won't be helping the environment, but it will add another financial burden to people who are already feeling very much squeezed.

Does the Premier think it's fair to add a new tax to electricity when rates are already on the rise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted for the question, because it is important for us to remember the totality of our tax reform. The leader of the third party has mentioned one part of it, but I am delighted to tell the people of Ontario and the members here about the other things that we are doing to help consumers.

The first thing we've done is we've reached a historic agreement with the federal government that sees some \$4.3 billion transferred, this year and next, from the federal government to the provincial government. For single people who make \$80,000 or less, they'll be receiving, in transitional payments, some \$300 tax-free. As well, families who have a total income of \$160,000 or less will be receiving \$1,000 tax-free to help in the transition from a world where we used to have two sales taxes to one where we just have one, like all the other modern economies—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The HST is absolutely the wrong tax and it's absolutely the wrong time. Not only is the Premier bringing in a tax that will raise the price of electricity by 8%, he's also increasing the cost of conservation by cancelling the sales tax break on energy-efficient appliances.

In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, people will be forced to pay more, whether they consume or whether they conserve. Can the Premier explain: How does this make any sense at all?

Hon. John Wilkinson: As I was saying, it is important to understand the entire situation regarding the HST. For example, as you're talking about the need for public transit, perhaps you have not heard what was reported by the city of London—that when they buy new buses after July 1, they will for the first time receive a 78% rebate from this government for the portion of the HST that

goes to the province. That is reducing the cost for a city to invest in its public transit. That is something you voted against.

I would say to the member of the third party that it is important to take a look at the entirety of this, and I would recommend that she join some 1.3 million other Ontarians who have gone to a source of information found at www.ontario.ca/taxchange. That is a wonderful resource that allows you to understand the entirety—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier and his revenue minister obviously have not heard is all of the families in Ontario who are very, very worried that the HST is going to make it more expensive to heat the house, make dinner and give the kids a bath every day. This is like kicking people who are already struggling in a very tough economy in the teeth.

If they're trying to conserve, they're going to find out that one of the government's very few energy conservation measures has been stopped. The question is a simple one: How can this Premier possibly get it so wrong?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find it rich that the NDP comes to this House and tells us about the HST when obviously they haven't heard a single comment about the NDP government in Nova Scotia raising their HST by 2%. I find it quite interesting that it seems to be one thing in Nova Scotia for their party and something else here in Ontario.

It is important for the good people of Ontario to understand that on top of the GST rebate families receive here in the province of Ontario, we are adding the new HST rebate, which will also be paid quarterly. That, for qualifying individuals and families, is some \$260 per year, tax free, for adults and children in the family—the most generous in the province. As well, perhaps the member forgets that we lowered personal income taxes on January 1, so we have the lowest personal tax rate of any jurisdiction, of any province in this great—

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

ONTARIO POWER AUTHORITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. The Ontario Power Authority, your so-called transitional bureaucracy, grows and grows with each new tax and fee you add to people's energy bills. Are you making Ontario families pay \$350 more per year on their energy bills so you can find a place to dump failed political candidates and former political aides like Ben Chin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Power Authority has very important work to do, and that's transitioning this energy sector from what we inherited to where we need to go.

They're working on our conservation programs. When we look at—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We know that the party opposite does not support the investments that go into conservation because they complain about them all the time. We need to conserve, and our conservation initiatives are helping 160,000 families reduce their energy consumption through our home energy plan.

We're investing in green energy. Just two weeks ago, we announced initiatives that will create 20,000 jobs in our green energy economy. You're opposed to those—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Maybe with all the noise, I didn't hear Ben Chin's name in that answer.

In 2004, when you created the Ontario Power Authority, you said that your energy LHIN was supposed to be independent and would take the politics out of electricity. But everyone knows Ben Chin is a big Liberal. The sunshine list reveals that Chin's salary went from \$112,000 per year to \$185,000 per year when he left your office to dream up PR schemes for the OPA. His most recent one is a promotional giveaway of air miles to the first 150,000 families who will pledge to become "laundry smart."

First you had Casino Windsor running an energy centre; now you have a power authority running contests. Did it even occur to you that Ontario families would rather see a break on their energy bills than subsidize air miles?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: We know that the Conservatives are opposed to conservation, and will continue to be, but we are not. We will continue to work with the Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I, like the member from Renfrew, want to hear the answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We will continue to work with the Ontario Power Authority and we will continue to drive forward the need to develop a culture of conservation in this province.

The Ontario Power Authority is working very hard at conservation initiatives on behalf of Ontarians. I know you don't recognize this, but we do. For every megawatt that's saved, that doesn't have to be produced or generated, it saves dollars in terms of future generation, which is a lot less effective and efficient.

I've got a list here of Conservatives that have been involved in the energy sector for a very long time. Let me just quickly read them off: Tom Long, Deb Hutton, Paul Rhodes, Mike Harris, Leslie Noble, Michael Gourley, Jaime Watt; you know all of—

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

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

When the CEO of a LHIN decides to quit two and a half years into a three-year contract, that CEO is compensated by being paid his or her full \$250,000 yearly salary despite working only six months of the last year.

Minister, whether it is LHINs or hospitals, CEOs are signing lucrative contracts that allow for very generous compensation packages when these CEOs quit, retire or are fired or let go. Why does the Minister of Health allow for this culture of entitlement to flourish among health care top executives?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. What I really need to say is that the value of the LHINs is extraordinary in our health care system. I know of no one who actually thinks the system we had before was better when it comes to driving integration in our health care system. What we had before were very siloed parts of our health care system. The hospitals were siloed, the CCACs were siloed, long-term care was siloed. There was nobody who was driving those important but distinct parts of our health care system together.

It's only through the LHINs that we're starting to see some really good news on the ground. We're starting to see our aging-at-home strategy making a difference when it comes to moving people who are in hospital but don't—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question was about compensation packages.

Just to let you know, the average salary increase of hospital executives was 7% in 2009. I can assure you that no other groups of workers negotiated a 7% increase in 2009. We now have, in health care, a \$700,000 club on the taxpayers' dime. And, as I mentioned, we see CEOs earning a full year's salary for six months' worth of work. The culture of entitlement amongst health care executives and other agencies of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care must end. It is wrong.

My question: When will the minister come out and say it is wrong, and signal to the health care system that these exorbitant salaries and benefits, those compensation packages, are not acceptable?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be less than honest if I didn't say that I, too, was concerned about the high level of compensation of some of our executives in our hospitals. That is why CEO salaries will be frozen for the next two years under the budget bill. It is an issue, and as I do my work to make sure that we in Ontario get the very best value for the money we spend on health care, looking at compensation is one of those things that I think we need to have a look at.

Those salaries will be frozen for two years, and we are looking at other options when it comes to making sure

we get the very best value for the money we spend on health care.

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know that it's often a struggle for young people, especially those living independently, to pay for all their monthly expenses. Many young people in Guelph tell me that they are paying out of pocket for their prescriptions, either because they are no longer covered by their parents' drug plan or because they've got a job that doesn't actually have health insurance, which is the typical situation for young people.

There are many prescription items that young people in these situations have to pay for themselves, including, for example, oral contraceptives—birth control pills—and medication for depression. I understand that the government's plan to provide fair generic drug prices for Ontarians will reduce the cost of generic drugs. Could the minister please provide an example of how—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Guelph for her question. We've heard lots about what these reforms are going to mean for the owners of pharmacies. I'd like to talk about what these reforms are going to mean for people.

Someone who is on the birth control pill Aviane 21 or Portia 21 currently pays about \$123. Once the price reductions are in place, their cost will be \$41. That's a saving of \$82. The drug citalopram for depression: Someone on this drug would currently pay \$337. Under the new plan, they would pay \$114. That's a saving on the drug cost of \$223. That's significant. The drug paroxetine for depression: They currently pay \$385. Once these savings are in place, they will pay—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister. Those are amazing savings, and I look forward to passing along the details to my constituents, because they do show what Ontarians can expect to save under this plan.

Generic drugs are used by lots of Ontarians to treat a variety of conditions, and when people don't have access to a drug plan, the costs can add up very quickly for people without drug coverage and with limited incomes. In some cases, it means that parents are not able to afford other things for their family; for example, supporting their children in after-school activities.

Can the minister please provide some more examples of how the government's plan will reduce prices for Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: These changes are the right thing to do. They will result in real savings for real people.

Let me give you some more examples. The drug pantoprazole is for acid reflux or ulcers. Someone on that drug now would pay \$528 over the course of the year. Under the reforms, they would pay \$179. That's a saving of \$349. The drug omeprazole, also for ulcers and re-

flux: They currently pay \$423. Under the new plan, they will pay \$200, for a savings of \$223. Ramipril for hypertension: They currently pay \$256; they will pay \$87.

These are real savings for real people. I look forward to hearing from the Conservative Party why they have taken—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. As many in the Liberal caucus know, we're just 73 days away from your greedy HST taking \$3 billion out of the wallets of Ontario families. The Liberal backbenchers over there hope the cheques you're mailing out will make Ontario seniors and families forget that you are raising taxes yet again. But Gilles Lamese in Cornwall sees the tactic for what it is. He says, "This attempt to bribe us with \$1,000 per family"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Notwithstanding the fact that you are quoting, that is language that is not parliamentary.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw. "This attempt ... with \$1,000 per family or \$300 per individual is not only childish, but insulting."

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry won't stand up for Gilles Lamese, so I will. Will you spare Ontario families and seniors the insults, and scrap your greedy HST tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for being so forthright by saying that he believes that Prime Minister Harper, Minister Flaherty and Senator Runciman are wrong on this.

When our economy is faced with the challenge of trying to create new private sector jobs that will create the wealth that pays the taxes for the services that the good people of Cornwall expect from their government, we decided to take a historic step by working with them.

1120

I just had an opportunity to be in Cornwall with my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and we had a remarkable trip where we had a great opportunity to answer people's questions. What they were telling me is that they were surprised by how much misinformation is out there and how very happy they were to find out the reality that seniors, for example, will have the largest tax cuts in the history of this province, effective on July—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm a little tired of the minister's rhetoric. Senator Runciman is a straight-shooter and a man of honour.

When the \$350 in energy taxes, fees and regulatory charges Dalton McGuinty has—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. The personal attacks at one another can take place outside the chamber: They're not appreciated in here.

Please continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: When the \$350 in energy taxes, fees and regulatory charges Dalton McGuinty has tacked on to electricity bills is added to your health tax, Ontario families won't see a nickel of your so-called "rebate." In addition to the health and energy taxes, in 73 days, people will be paying 13% more for gas at the pump, home heating and utility costs, haircuts, gym memberships, and the list goes on and on.

Betty Cook of Windsor makes a more blunt statement than Gilles Lamese in her assessment of the HST when she says, "I think it stinks." Ministers Duncan and Pupa-tello won't stand up for Betty Cook so I will.

What makes you think \$1,000—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: Well, I'm having a little trouble over here with the members opposite. I've heard from them that they are opposed to this, but I have not heard their leader say that they would repeal it. I have not heard their leader say that they would change anything that we're doing. I think that they agree with their former colleague Senator Runciman, who said, before we introduced this, "I think, in theory, our party is supportive of harmonization. In principle, we think it's something that should occur." Of course, then he followed his leader in opposition to it, but of course, he won't repeal it. Now he's in the Senate, where his job for the Prime Minister is to ensure that legislation gets through that Senate.

So I want to thank Senator Runciman and all of the good people who are working together; they understand that we need 600,000 more people in this province working. We need \$47 billion—

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

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Ontario workers lost their jobs because of reckless, greedy Wall Street bankers. Ontario taxpayers should not give them more money so they can take away more of our assets.

From the subprime mortgage debacle that tanked the world economy to monkeying around with Greece's debt, from apologizing before Congress for disastrous dealings to facing fraud charges, Goldman Sachs does not share Ontarians' values and doesn't deserve our money.

Will the Premier sack this reckless, unethical Wall Street bank today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I gather my colleague is making reference to some contractual arrangement that our government may have entered into with Goldman Sachs. It is our practice to honour any agreements that we have entered into.

I think as well, from what I read—and I know my honourable colleague would have read the same kinds of things—that there are some pretty serious allegations that have been made against Goldman Sachs south of the border. I think we owe it to, if nothing else, our respect for the process, for the process to unfold and for a determination and a finding to be made, if any, at some point in time.

But of course, I think the responsible thing for us to do is to honour any agreements which we might have entered into.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm sure that Goldman Sachs is happy that there's a defender somewhere in the world for them.

The Securities and Exchange Commission has launched fraud charges against Goldman Sachs. The European Union is investigating them. Britain's Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, is calling for authorities there to investigate and accusing the investment bank of "moral bankruptcy." The German government is demanding information about their dealings.

If you're unprepared to fire them, will you immediately cancel all work with Goldman Sachs until the serious allegations are addressed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague makes reference to actions taken by national governments. We are a subnational government.

We have contracted with Goldman Sachs to perform particular kinds of work. I think it's important to come back to what we're really talking about here. We're talking about a potential asset transaction of some kind. We're looking at some of the monies that have presently been invested in some of our long-term businesses, like OLG, LCBO and others, and whether the best way for us to use that taxpayer money is to continue to have it invested in those systems or to remove that and invest it in some kind of initiative to help us build a stronger economy. It's a thoughtful review process, and we look forward to continuing to engage in it.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Labour. This province needs new health and safety initiatives for Ontario's workplaces, and I'd like to ask about a recent inspection blitz focusing on fall hazards in the construction sector.

Falls can have tragic consequences in the construction sector. Reducing their frequency makes Ontario workplaces safer.

This inspection blitz ended last Friday. It was a targeted enforcement campaign where inspectors visited construction projects and focused on fall-related training, supervision and equipment. It was the longest health and safety blitz ever conducted by the ministry.

Minister, Ontario needs to know more about this safety blitz. What else can you tell us?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his advocacy and for his support of the health and safety of our province's workers.

As the member stated, our 90-day blitz of fall hazards concluded last Friday. During these past three months, we visited more than 2,500 construction projects involving thousands of workers. We inspected these workplaces for compliance with health and safety requirements. We issued a range of orders, everything from warnings to stop-work orders.

Over the next few weeks, we will be posting our findings on our website. We will also be providing our blitz results through our health and safety partners, as well as our expert advisory panel, chaired by Tony Dean, and the section 21 construction committee. I'll be asking for recommendations on—

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, the health and safety of Ontario workers is essential, both for construction workers and for the firms that employ them. During the past six years, Ontario has improved workplace health and safety in this province. Workplace lost-time injuries have decreased by more than 20%.

There's more, however, to this than statistics, and Ontarians need more information. Would the minister please share with this House how the results and analysis of this particular safety blitz will help protect our workers in the future?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Thank you to the member again. It's my ministry's mandate and my personal pledge that we will do all we can to make Ontario's workplaces safer and healthier. That's why my ministry inspectors are out on work sites every single day: to ensure that our workers' rights and their safety are protected.

I'm confident that the results of this extensive blitz will give us a good picture of occupational health and safety in today's construction sector. I am very much looking forward to hearing the advice and recommendations from our health and safety partners as a result of the data that have been compiled during this fall-hazards blitz. These results and recommendations will help us point the way to improve health and safety. My ministry and our partners will join together to fight the common dangers of fall hazards.

1130

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have a question for the Minister of Education. Do you support the Pascal report on full-day kindergarten in its entirety?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think our government has a very strong commitment to early learners in Ontario, and that is why the Premier announced that we will establish our full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds.

We did ask Dr. Pascal to consider our earliest learners and provide us with some ideas on how we might move forward to support families and our youngest learners to enable them to be successful when they arrive at school.

We've received the report, and I think it's fair to say that the reaction to our initiative on the part of this government has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly by parents but even by the business community, which recognizes that what we are doing here, the first of its kind in North America, is an investment in our youth and an investment in—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Pascal report, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, states on page 14, "Children's participation would be by parental choice, with parents having the option of a half, full (school hours), or fee-based extended day of programming."

Minister, I have an email that I'm going to ask the pages to take over to you.

Can you explain to me why, on January 7, a memo from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board suggests that you are taking away parental choice by forcing parents whose preference is half days to, instead, transfer their child out of their current school that is only offering full days? What kind of choice is that for parents?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The choice is still there. Parents continue to have the right to choose if they want to have their children enrolled in a kindergarten program in the province of Ontario. In fact, the law in Ontario is that, until a child is six years of age, they are not required to be enrolled in any school. With the announcement of our early learning program, the same rules apply. If parents wish to have their children enrolled in the program, that would be their choice.

We are not making any law that says, "If your child is four years old or five years old, they must be enrolled." It continues to be the option for the family. We are committed to ensuring that in the province of Ontario we have the very best early learning program. We know that the—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Minister of Health. People in Kenora want to know: Does the Minister of Health believe it is right that a 90-year-old woman who is a patient at Lake of the Woods District Hospital is told that the only long-term-care bed for her is in a long-term-care home in a community that is 220 kilometres away? Does the Minister of Health think it is right to tell families to send their loved ones so far away just to get the health care they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, I do not think it is right for people who are in hospitals in Kenora to be told they must go hours away for long-term care. This is an issue that I have taken some interest in, and I think the member might want to know that there are now 13

patients in need of long-term-care beds at the Lake of the Woods hospital. They are a top priority for placement in long-term care in the community and where they choose across the LHIN. The LHIN is working actively with the ministry on a plan to address the ALC pressures in Kenora. This is a range of solutions, including interim beds and home care.

There are two long-term-care homes in Kenora. Birchwood Terrace has five spaces available. They are temporarily not admitting people because of an infection outbreak. They are working with public health, and we are hoping that situation—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: As the minister knows, it's not just this 90-year-old patient; it is several patients. They are all being told that if they want a long-term-care bed, "then go 220 kilometres down the highway, away from your family, away from your loved ones and anyone who even knows you." What is worse, there are 12 long-term-care beds at the home for the aged in Kenora, but they are shut down due to lack of funding.

Many people have written to the minister, and I've written to the minister, asking that the 12 long-term-care beds that are shut down due to lack of funding receive the operating funding they need. The question is: Will the minister provide the funding, or does the McGuinty government think it's appropriate to send people—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me confirm that no patients have moved from the Kenora area to Rainycrest, Fort Frances. This is not hospital policy. The CEO of the hospital has sent a letter to the families, to the patients, and clarified with the doctors and the nurses that they are not moving.

The member opposite is apparently unaware that Pinecrest, the home he is speaking about, does have beds available but they are what we call D beds. They are not up to the standards that we insist be met for interim beds.

We are working with the LHIN, with Pinecrest, to determine how we can address this issue as quickly as possible. We are committed to doing this, and we are working very hard to get—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Minister, transit is a vital part of the greater Toronto and Hamilton region. Whether you live in the downtown core, in communities like my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, or further away in places like Barrie, Oshawa or Georgetown, transit provides a convenient and environmentally friendly alternative to driving.

Minister, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area is projected to grow by more than 3.7 million people by

2031. Ensuring that we have a strong, comprehensive transit system in place is going to be the key to supporting our communities and the economy.

Would the minister tell the House what the government is doing to build better transit for tomorrow?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his question and for his work for the city of Toronto and for his constituents.

Our government knows how important it is to build a strong and coherent transit system. That's why we delivered on our commitment to establish Metrolinx. The job of Metrolinx is to improve the coordination and integration of all the transportation in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

We continue to make investments. Just last week, I was at the Lansdowne bridge in the west end of Toronto, with Metrolinx staff and the federal Minister of Finance, where we made a joint federal-provincial announcement for \$16.6 million toward six GO projects in the GTA. This money will go toward the Bloor Street bridge, the Brock Street bridge, the Dufferin Street bridge, the Dupont Street bridge, and Lansdowne and Queen, all along the Georgetown South corridor, to accommodate a fourth track, which is necessary to build capacity on that track.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Minister, thank you for your response. I'm pleased to hear that the government and Metrolinx are moving forward to expand capacity of the GO Transit network. This is good news for all Ontarians. Families and seniors in Scarborough–Rouge River rely on the TTC as well as GO Transit to get downtown and to other parts of the city.

Minister, there has been a lot of talk about Transit City over the past few weeks and misinformation about the government's commitment to these projects.

Would the minister clarify for us the status of the Transit City projects and tell us more about the government's investment in transit in Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There has been a lot of talk about this issue over the last few weeks.

Let me be clear: We are not cancelling these projects. Rather, we're stretching the investment over a longer period of time, and we have said that repeatedly. I've asked Metrolinx to come up with a plan to phase these projects in. They are in the process of doing that. It will be a fiscally responsible plan. We were forced to do that because of our economic circumstances.

We have made landmark investments in the GTA in transit. Since we began the gas tax program in 2004, the city of Toronto has received almost \$688 million in gas tax. We have provided the city of Toronto \$416 million for the replacement of streetcars, \$870 million for the Spadina subway extension. There have been more investments in transit than for a generation—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, the agricultural fair is an important tradition in communities across Ontario. As you know, admissions to events held and sponsored by agricultural societies are exempt from charging the provincial sales tax.

Can you assure agricultural societies that your government will continue to exempt agricultural fairs from having to pay the harmonized sales tax to suppliers, as well as charging HST on the admission to fairs?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm going to pass this to the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. It is, in the province of Ontario, a situation today where the GST is or is perhaps not charged when it comes to agricultural fairs. It really depends on the amount of ticket revenue they have.

1140

So what are the federal guidelines right now? As a not-for-profit, if the agricultural fair has less than \$50,000 worth of sales, they do not charge the GST and they do not charge the PST. I can assure the member that after July 1, they will not charge the HST because they will not fall under the current federal threshold.

In a situation where an agricultural fair does, indeed, charge the GST, they will be required to charge the HST, but as a result, they will also be entitled to a rebate—the most generous series of rebates in the country. So I'd be more than happy to help the member—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, that answer just reinforces why I've had so many agricultural societies in my community ask me to get clarification on whether or not they are exempt. They have written a number of letters; they've asked the Minister of Agriculture to respond to this issue, and she has ignored it. I suppose that by referring it, she is ignoring it again.

I simply am looking for clarification on whether agricultural societies across Ontario will continue to be exempt from charging the HST on their admission. Without all of the other side stuff, will you answer that question? Admissions: Are they going to be HST-exempt?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member, when you ask a question about sales tax, the answer comes from the Minister of Revenue, not the Minister of Agriculture. So it is important that you ask the minister responsible.

What I can tell you is that the federal government today, in regard to the GST, has a series of rules that apply to agricultural fairs. It has to do with, what are their sales? I'd be more than happy to sit down with the member and review each and every agricultural fair in her riding to ensure that her agricultural fairs, which form the backbone of the heritage of our agricultural communities, have the information that they need.

As I've said many times, anyone can go to our website at www.ontario.ca/taxchange; some 1.3 million Ontarians have already gone to that website. I know that if she went to that website, she would find—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, Labatt closed its Lakeport plant in Hamilton. The move cost 143 families good jobs that they relied on to pay the bills. A few companies are actually interested in taking over the plant, which would keep very much-needed jobs in Hamilton. It's not going to work, however, if Labatt is following through with their plans to take the equipment out of the plant.

My question is this: Has the Premier talked to his friend and Labatt executive, Charlie Angelakos, about the company's plans?

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I do appreciate the opportunity to speak about Hamilton, firstly, because Hamilton is an important hub for Ontario business, and we are determined to do everything we can to help Hamilton thrive. Number two, let me speak specifically to this issue: We worry greatly when we hear that there are workers who suddenly find that they won't have a job. We worry about those people.

We have been in constant contact with the member from Hamilton Mountain, who has raised this issue continually with us, and I have to tell you that we have made contact with Labatt. We have talked to them. The Ontario government cannot tell a business what they're going to do, but what we can do is prescribe the kind of business environment to want business to happen in that region, and Hamilton is the prime example where significant infrastructure investment by this government will make for a terrific future for the city of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is a chance to protect 143 jobs in a very hard-hit community. Labatt needs to be convinced that keeping the equipment at the plant is actually the right thing to do. What better candidate for that job than the Premier, whose dear friend and former aid Charlie Angelakos is an executive with Labatt? Will the Premier get on the phone with Mr. Angelakos, ask him to keep the equipment at the plant and work out a deal to protect these jobs? That's what we need. We don't need worry; we need to you pick up the phone and call a friend.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think what's very telling is that the Hamilton region, as well as other parts of Ontario, do extraordinarily well in those microbreweries, in craft breweries. Ontario has a terrific reputation, not just with the big international breweries, but also with the ones that were successful in the Lakeport plant.

What we're determined to do is continue to sell Hamilton to the world, to continue to talk about the skilled trade that's available in that region—to know that we have workers who are prepared to work as well as any best workforce in the world. We're determined to do that.

We are happy to play a role, if we can, to incite others to come and look to Hamilton to see what they can do in terms of investment. We will continue to do that and we are determined to do the best that we can for the city of Hamilton.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Ontario's culture industry plays a central role in improving the quality of life in Ontario, but it also plays a critical role in Ontario's economic life.

Artists are important to the economy of Ontario. They cultivate creativity and they drive economic activity. There were 80,000 net new jobs created between 1999 and 2007, but things are tough right now; things are very tough in the cultural industry. My question to the minister: What are you doing and what's our government doing to strengthen support for artists and this vital cultural industry?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want to welcome the opportunity to talk about culture in Ontario. Ontario artists are indeed the driving force of the culture industry.

Our government understands that investments in the Ontario cultural industry are now more important than ever. Since 2003, our government has invested more than \$2 billion in our culture agencies. That includes over \$800 million in the Ontario Trillium Foundation, over \$300 million in the Ontario Arts Council and over \$80 million in the Ontario Media Development Corp.

These investments support Ontario artists, strengthen Ontario's cultural industry and improve the socio-economic state of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. David Zimmer: What the cultural industry and artists are looking for are some very specific assurances from our government. Specifically, Minister, they want to know that we remain committed to supporting the arts and culture in the future. It's no time to slow down in this investment, given this economic climate.

Minister, in this year's budget, what specifically are we doing to support artists and the cultural activity of this province and the economy that it supports?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member again for the question. I want to assure artists across this province that our government remains committed to supporting the cultural industry. This year, the Trillium Foundation will receive \$120 million to continue support for the non-profit arts and culture organizations.

Since 2003, we have increased the Ontario Trillium Foundation's budget by 20%. We also increased the Ontario Arts Council's annual budget by 140%, bringing it

to \$60 million per year. As I said before, we remain committed to continuing these investments and to continuing support for Ontario artists and everyone in Ontario's cultural industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know they will be acknowledged shortly, but I wanted to acknowledge, in the east gallery, Gary Lipinski, the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario; Sharon McBride, vice-chair of the Métis Nation of Ontario; Tim Pile, secretary treasurer of the Métis Nation of Ontario; Joanne Meyer, director of intergovernmental relations; Bill Wilkinson, director of economic development; and Melanie Paradis, director of lands, resources and consultation. On behalf of all members, welcome.

WEARING OF SASH

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd be asking for unanimous consent, for those members who wish, to wear the Métis sash.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EARTH DAY

Mr. Toby Barrett: As the minister and this government fill our calendar with the new designated green days—Climate Change Awareness Day, Waste Diversion Day—and celebrate the latest week-long designation of Earth Week, I'm old school; I prefer to go back to the roots, if you will. Call me a purist, but I prefer to stand by the message that first launched a coordinated effort aimed at across-the-board environmental awareness. I'm speaking, of course, of Earth Day, which we will all recognize this Thursday, 40 years after the first such event helped spawn the environmental movement.

With the multitude of days, weeks, months and hours—I'm still waiting for someone to declare Earth Fortnight—we lose the importance of what we're supposed to be doing in the first place. Maybe that's why we see government more interested in setting targets than meeting them. This government told us years ago that it was targeting 60% diversion by 2008. We're now at 2010 and nowhere near that number.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has told us that Ontario will again come nowhere near its carbon emission targets. Never mind the targets, this government

couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. I guess that's why we see this government going mute on the issue of climate change since the passage of its much-ballyhooed cap-and-trade legislation.

So I invite Ontarians to turn back the clock, go back to our green roots and recognize Earth Day this Thursday, April 22.

TULIP FESTIVAL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about the world-famous Canadian Tulip Festival, happening soon, from May 7 to 24, in the beautiful city of Ottawa.

The festival originated with a gift of 100,000 tulips to the city of Ottawa from the Dutch royal family as thanks for Canada's legacy in freeing the people of the Netherlands from oppression in the Second World War and for providing a safe harbour for the Dutch royal family in our city during that tumultuous period.

With that special history comes an important anniversary this year. The 2010 festival will be officially celebrating the 65th anniversary of our Canadian troops' liberating the Netherlands. In addition, this year's festival will also be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy.

This event has become a staple in Ottawa, because not only are there truly impressive tulip displays, but events for people of all ages and cuisine, music and crafts from more than 30 countries.

I would like to compliment the hard-working team that makes this event possible every year, including Chair David Luxton, President Teri Kirk and the rest of the team and volunteers who make it happen.

I encourage residents of Ottawa to get out and enjoy this very special event. Ontarians, Canadians and our guests from around the world ought to come and see one of the best festivals in Canada, right in our nation's capital. Tulipfestival.ca has all the information and events to make the most of this year's festival.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Volunteering is a fundamental act of citizenship in our province. As more and more people become involved in volunteering, our communities continue to grow and prosper.

By caring and contributing to change, volunteers are changing lives while increasing their own life skills. Every day, thousands of volunteers donate their time and energy without any expectation of monetary reward. Thousands of Ontarians benefit from the selfless acts of volunteers. This week, during National Volunteer Week, we celebrate the hard work put forth by Ontario's volunteers.

Today, I will be reintroducing my private member's bill, the Criminal Record Checks for Volunteers Act.

Many volunteer organizations, particularly those dealing with children and individuals with a disability,

require their volunteers to submit a criminal record check. In many cases, volunteers have to pay out of their own pocket for a criminal record check, or the organization has to fundraise to underwrite the cost of criminal record checks for their volunteers.

The goal of my bill is to allow volunteers to pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet access this record to distribute to multiple agencies at no additional cost to the volunteer or the agency. This cost-saving initiative would encourage more volunteers to donate their time to multiple causes and reduce unnecessary duplication for our police services.

Volunteering is important for our communities. Without the important work that volunteers do, our schools, hospitals and many organizations would suffer.

STUDENT LEADERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to rise today to acknowledge some phenomenal schools in my riding: Fern and Parkdale, which last year were the first schools to host the girls' government program anywhere in Ontario; and this year, Annette and Runnymede. The girls this year were immortalized in Jim Coyle's article about them

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the clerks and to everyone else, including Minister Bradley, for taking part in this wonderful initiative to get young women involved in politics and parliamentary procedure.

I also want to thank City View Alternative Senior School, another great, forward-looking school whose students Colin, Liddell and Corinne are shadowing me all week, both in the constituency office and here, to learn about what we do and to open these doors so that students can really learn about the political process.

I'm hoping that one day down the line, all of this actually encourages these young people to run for office, particularly the young women, and that one day we see them not only come back here as members of provincial Parliament but also in Ottawa, where I take girls' government as well, so that one day we see both a female Prime Minister of Canada and a female Premier of Ontario. That would be good news.

Thank you to all the schools, and thank you to the students here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm sure you'll see a female Speaker at some point here in the province of Ontario too.

CAREFIRST

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise today to speak of an organization known as Carefirst, which serves my riding of Richmond Hill.

Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association is a non-profit charitable community services agency serving the greater Toronto area and York region. This organization was established in 1976, and its services have grown from the delivery of a Chinese meals-on-

wheels service to a full range of community support services.

Carefirst Family Health Team, which is part of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care initiative to establish greater access to interdisciplinary physicians as well as other health care specialists for communities across the province, opened its doors to patients in July 2007.

With a team of family physicians, registered nurses and nurse practitioners as well as supporting administrative staff, Richmond Hill family health centre provides primary health care to the surrounding communities, including Canadians of Chinese and South Asian heritage.

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I had the great pleasure of accompanying Premier McGuinty on a visit to the Carefirst Richmond Hill location this past Friday. I was very pleased to see the amazing and tremendous work that is being done at the Carefirst Family Health Team.

Please join me in thanking the dedicated staff at Carefirst for their outstanding work in serving the people of Richmond Hill.

TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

Mr. Ted Arnott: Three and a half weeks ago, the government tabled its budget for the coming fiscal year. Within the Ministry of Finance's budget papers document, we see that this year the Ministry of Transportation plans to spend over \$3 billion on highway expansion, highway and bridge rehabilitation and other transportation infrastructure. This budget allocation is up dramatically from last year's funding levels.

I'm the first to acknowledge that the Ministry of Transportation has many worthy projects on its priority list, I'm sure, but surely this increased funding, some \$606 million more than last year, means that people in Puslinch township can anticipate that the Morriston bypass will soon be built. We've talked about this project for decades—literally. Working with Puslinch township council and staff, we have repeatedly stressed the need for this project in every possible way.

On behalf of the residents of the township whom I'm honoured to serve, I have to say that we are sick and tired of this government's continued excuses for delays. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation is in a privileged position to help move this project forward. We need her active advocacy for this project, which will benefit the city of Guelph every bit as much as it benefits the county of Wellington.

On February 22, the Minister of Transportation was invited to come to Puslinch township to speak to the council and its residents and see for herself why this project should be considered amongst the ministry's highest priorities. I call upon the minister to accept this invitation, come to the township of Puslinch, meet with the council and residents and help us to move this project forward.

COOTES TO ESCARPMENT PARK SYSTEM

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I rise today to discuss an important conservation strategy under way in my region, the Cootes to escarpment park system. Eight different agencies have come together to protect 3,700 acres of natural landscape containing nearly a quarter of all of Canada's different plant species growing within its boundaries, including several rare species.

In the face of growing communities and urbanization, this is the last area of the escarpment that is not divided from Lake Ontario wetlands by a 400-series highway. It is a region bigger than Hyde Park in London or Central Park in New York.

The eight organizations that own various parts of the land are now working under a new management system to preserve these lands and implement a strategy to educate the public on the biodiversity of the area and protect this irreplaceable region.

The plans for the Cootes to escarpment park system were developed in consultation with public stakeholders, local government and non-governmental organizations. I'd like to commend all those involved in protecting this beautiful area and certainly offer my support.

I would add, on a personal note, that it's my hope that this will be the first step, perhaps a springboard, to seeing this area eventually declared Ontario's first urban biosphere provincial park.

NATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION WEEK

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I rise today to recognize and bring attention to National Soil Conservation Week, which runs from April 18 through April 24. This marks the 25th year that Canada is recognizing this event to highlight the importance of conserving vital topsoil.

The McGuinty government recognizes the significant contribution that farmers make to Ontario's environmental stewardship. We understand the pride that Ontario's farmers take in being excellent stewards of the land. Soil is one of their most precious resources.

Good soil management contributes to better-quality and higher crop yields, and every farmer in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Ontario understands the importance of conserving this vital resource for the next generation of food producers.

Soil conservation is not only necessary for our agricultural producers but also for society in general. It helps maintain resources, such as water, air and wildlife habitat. Today's soil conservation practices contribute significantly to reducing and removing overall greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. This resource is one of the most fragile on the planet. To paraphrase Mark Twain, they're not making any more of it.

I urge members to take time during National Soil Conservation Week to think about our soil resources and to give credit to the producers and their organizations,

such as the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, that are so dedicated to its conservation.

POLISH COMMUNITY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On Thursday, April 15, 2010, I joined with thousands of Polish Canadians to remember the lives of the President of the Republic of Poland, the late Mr. Lech Kaczynski; the First Lady, Mrs. Maria Kaczynski; and 94 other Polish military, political, social and religious leaders who had lost their lives in a fatal plane crash on Saturday, April 10, 2010. I was touched by the strong show of support for Poland at the St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic church, which is in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South.

With more than a thousand years of history, the Polish people have demonstrated that they are a resilient people. They have endured partition, wars, occupation and Communism, and have still come out a strong, democratic nation.

The story of Poland is a testament to the principle of freedom. With the same strength that the Polish people have demonstrated to overcome the Nazi occupation and the Katyn massacre, I know they will overcome this sorrowful time as well.

But they are not alone. Ontario mourns with Poland, and on behalf of the residents of my riding, Mississauga–Brampton South, I would like to express my most sincere condolences to Polish Canadians in my riding and across Canada.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act /
Projet de loi 236, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de
retraite.

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES VÉRIFICATIONS DU CASIER JUDICIAIRE DES BÉNÉVOLES

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers /
Projet de loi 38, Loi concernant les vérifications du casier judiciaire des bénévoles.

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. Sylvia Jones: The goal of my private member's bill would be to create a system whereby volunteers pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet can access this record to distribute to multiple volunteer organizations at no additional cost to the volunteer or the agency.

YEAR OF THE MÉTIS

ANNÉE DES MÉTIS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice respecting the commemoration of the Year of the Métis and that up to 15 minutes be allotted to each recognized party to debate the motion, following which the Speaker shall immediately put all questions necessary to dispose of the motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We move that this House commemorates 2010 as the Year of the Métis; and that the Ontario Legislature recognizes and honours the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people in the province as well as the historic and ongoing contributions of the Métis in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: At the outset, I'd like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean, Mr. Chiarelli, and the MPP from Sault Sainte Marie, David Oraziatti.

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It is my pleasure to rise in the House today on this very important and unique occasion where we recognize the unique history, culture and people who are the Métis. I introduced earlier Gary Lipinski, president of the Métis Nation of the province of Ontario, and his executive, Sharon McBride, as well as Tim Pile, Joanne Meyer, Bill Wilkinson and Melanie Paradis.

I would like to say at the outset:

Remarks in Michif.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: And to all of you who don't speak Michif, that's Michif for "Hello and welcome."

The Métis are an important part of the richness of Ontario's cultural tapestry. They are one of our founding peoples and are recognized specifically in the Constitution Act of 1982.

Les Métis constituent une partie importante de la richesse de la mosaïque culturelle de l'Ontario. Ils comptent parmi nos peuples fondateurs et sont reconnus comme tels par la Loi constitutionnelle de 1982.

They built a new culture, taking the traditions of First Nations and European fur traders and creating something very unique. This culture remains vibrant today, a symbol of the strength found not only in valuing differences but in celebrating them, and we can learn from these lessons.

It is appropriate for us to honour the Métis this year, for it was 125 years ago that the Northwest Rebellion ended at Batoche in Saskatchewan. Batoche has since become a symbol of the resilience of the Métis, of the people who were determined to preserve their culture, their heritage, their uniqueness.

The Métis, of course, were born of the union between European fur traders and our First Nations peoples. The result was a people with knowledge of and respect for the land, an adventuresome spirit, a drive and determination, and a people dedicated to freedom. The voyageurs, working for 16 to 18 hours each day, paddled and portaged across this province and across this land at speeds that many of us would find incomprehensible, all of which they accomplished with about 200 pounds strapped to their backs. They helped to build what would become Canada, what would become the province and the nation that we love.

The coureurs de bois ran the rivers and woods of early Canada carrying messages and medicines, supplies and furs, and battling the elements—both the physical elements and the natural elements. From these rugged souls, now symbolic of the Métis culture, grew a people with a unique lifestyle, a unique attitude, who valued their freedom and independence. Indeed, long before their official recognition in the Constitution Act, they stood with all peoples in Canada and fought for the freedom of our country, of those fighting against a tyranny throughout the Second World War and many other wars throughout this country's history.

The Métis rallied behind Louis Riel, a Métis who had helped bring the province of Manitoba into being in a fight for the land they loved. Though they were denied the land they had settled by the Red River, they survived and prospered. Though governments refused to recognize them and, again, pushed them from their community at Batoche, they survived. The Métis are a strong people. Their strength helped build Canada and this province. They helped keep our country safe. They helped protect and preserve the freedom that we oftentimes take for granted, but which enables us to stand in the Legislature today and make laws for the province we know as Ontario.

For this and for their part in our history and what we as a province and country are today, they deserve our respect and our recognition.

Pour cela et pour le rôle qu'ils ont joué dans notre histoire et dans ce que sont devenus notre province et notre pays aujourd'hui, ils méritent notre respect et notre reconnaissance.

So I say, in closing, on va se revoir. À la prochaine. Prends soins de toi. L'Ontario connaît et honore votre passé, votre présent, puis votre futur dans la province.

We honour your past, your present and your future in Ontario.

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

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to help honour the Métis Nation of Ontario.

This proclamation speaks to the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people, and very significantly mentions the ongoing contributions of the Métis in Ontario. This is important. They are now building on the strengths of their history, heritage and wisdom to build a stronger Métis Nation and a stronger Ontario.

The Métis Nation of Ontario today is a vibrant, energetic, responsible, contributing people actively engaged in education and economic development at all levels—a community of peoples who live and work in every sector throughout this province.

It was not that many years ago that the relationship between the government of Ontario and the Métis Nation was not as strong as it is today. Today, Ontario's relationship with the Métis Nation of Ontario has become a series of historic events which continue to strengthen our relationship.

On July 7, 2004, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Métis Nation of Ontario signed a four-point interim harvesting agreement that recognized the Métis Nation of Ontario's harvest card system. This historic agreement meant that Métis rights holders hunting for food to feed their families would not be charged unless in violation of safety standards or conservation. We look forward to celebrating with the Métis Nation of Ontario when the long-term agreement on harvesting is signed.

In addition, on November 17, 2008, Ontario and the Métis Nation of Ontario signed the historic framework agreement recognizing the unique history, identity, customs, practices, traditions and rights of the Métis communities in the province. This agreement provided a framework for the parties to work together for a better future together.

Since the signing of the framework agreement, two other relationship agreements were signed, with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and agreements with other ministries are being discussed.

As well, Ontario's new relationship fund has provided the Métis Nation of Ontario and its communities with the capacity to participate in meaningful consultations with government and the private sector. Indeed, in the first six months of the 2009-10 fiscal year, the Métis Nation of Ontario received over 300 consultation notices, and is currently involved in consultation activities for 50 major

and medium projects across the province. These are in the energy, mining, forestry and infrastructure sectors.

The Métis Nation of Ontario has developed an economic development strategy to create wealth for the Métis Nation, and Ontario's economic policy will assist them in moving forward with their plans.

When Premier Dalton McGuinty was in opposition, he proposed that there should be a chair of Métis studies. That proposal has become a reality, and the chair of Métis studies is now in place at the University of Ottawa.

Incidentally, I have to say as a member from Ottawa that I'm very proud that the head office of the Métis Nation of Ontario is in the city of Ottawa, and I, too, want to welcome the special guests we have here today.

In closing, I know I speak for everyone here today in saying we all look forward to celebrating 2010 as the Year of the Métis and the continuation of our strong relationship together.

I again welcome them and thank them for being here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to participate today in expressing my support for the 2010 Year of the Métis Nation and to recognize the guests that are here with us to share this year with us and also this very, very important historic and cultural recognition.

It's my pleasure to join the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the member from Ottawa West-Nepean in acknowledging the unique history, culture and people that the Métis individuals are in Canada, and to commemorate 2010 as the Year of the Métis.

As a point of interest, our own caucus member from Brant, Dave Levac, is of Métis descent. I don't know how many people knew that, but I know that he has expressed to me that this is a very proud year for the Métis as well and he shares in that support.

In particular, I want to recognize Gary Lipinski, the president of the Métis Nation. I know that Mr. Lipinski has been instrumental in enhancing and strengthening relationships, certainly with the government of Ontario.

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As many of you know, Sault Ste. Marie is home to the historic Métis council. The distinct culture of the Métis Nation of Ontario has evolved from a rich and dynamic history of European fur traders and aboriginal people in the 18th and 19th centuries, as has been referenced today. Harvesting and hunting was an integral part of the Métis community and certainly part of the culture in Sault Ste. Marie. The modern-day Métis community of Sault Ste. Marie is still rooted in the historic culture of the community, and they are one of the four founding peoples, obviously, recognized by the Constitution Act.

Métis people assisted new settlers adapting to the harsh climate of this country. The Métis worked to clear land and plant crops and were instrumental in the trade industry that existed at that time in our country. It is important that we recognize and celebrate their contri-

butions to the building of provinces in this country and to our national unity.

The Métis were obviously instrumental in the entry of Manitoba into Confederation in 1870, and today the Métis are involved in all facets of Canadian society and continue to contribute to the building of our province and our country.

The Métis Nation of Ontario has contributed so much to the enhancement and the preservation of Métis culture in Ontario that it is very fitting that we recognize this year in celebration of the Métis Nation.

Today we have a much better understanding of and appreciation for the dynamic history of the Métis Nation and its contribution to the building of Canada. I can say, as a former high school history teacher, having spent many lessons discussing with young people in our community in Sault Ste. Marie the events and the factors that helped to shape and build our country, that the story of Louis Riel and the Métis Nation and the contributions of the Métis people to our country are at times controversial but no less important. They certainly play a very important role in the making of our country. I know that the students I taught as a high school teacher were always very intrigued, interested and took away very valuable lessons from the story of Louis Riel and that time period in Canadian history. I want to thank the representatives who are here today for continuing to make us aware of the challenges and the issues that Métis people in Ontario and in Canada face and for being here today.

I think it's also important to mention the recent progress with the Métis community. As you're aware, the Ontario government and the Métis Nation signed an historic agreement on November 17, 2008, in which we jointly agreed to promote and facilitate the recognition and advancement of the Métis people in Ontario. This framework has set a new course for a collaborative relationship between the Ontario government and the Métis people of Ontario. This framework is certainly very important, and we will continue to work with the Métis Nation of Ontario to improve the well-being of Métis children, families and communities while working to protect and promote the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people.

We are also encouraging economic partnership opportunities and recognize and respect Métis traditions, structures and institutions. We remain committed to building trust, prosperity and hope by expanding opportunities for Métis people in Ontario, together with First Nations and Inuit peoples living in the province, and we continue to work to preserve their distinct culture.

I want to recognize the minister and Mr. Lipinski for the great work they're doing and the great work that the Métis community continues to do in my community of Sault Ste. Marie. I certainly think that as a government, being the first government in this province to create the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, we have taken a very notable step forward in helping to build those relationships and dedicate specific resources, staff and the like to

recognizing that the aboriginal peoples of the province of Ontario play a very important role in its well-being.

Again, it's a pleasure to participate in the discussion today and to recognize the important contribution and rich heritage of the Métis people.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: As the PC critic to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I'm honoured to rise this afternoon in support of the declaration of 2010 as the Year of the Métis. I want to thank my friend Dr. Alex Roman for his assistance in the preparation of these remarks, which I extend to the House today on behalf of the loyal official opposition.

On December 9, 2009, the House of Commons of Canada adopted the following motion by unanimous consent:

"That, in the opinion of the House, the government should utilize next year, 2010, to commemorate the Year of the Métis in recognition of the 125th anniversary of the historic events of 1885 in Saskatchewan; and further, the government should recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of the Métis Nation across Canada which have enriched the lives of all Canadians socially, economically, politically and culturally."

As Métis National Council President Clément Chartier has stated, "The Year of the Métis will be an opportunity to commemorate the Métis who fought defending their people at the Battles of Duck Lake, Fish Creek and Batoche 125 years ago. It will also be a year of celebrating Métis culture and heritage, which now flourishes in this country."

The entire world witnessed the Métis Nation's participation in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games and beheld the richness and vibrancy of Métis culture, which is an integral part of Canada's national heritage and cultural mosaic.

The Year of the Métis Nation will also include the "Back to Batoche" celebrations, which will be held from July 18 to 25 in Batoche, Saskatchewan, the site of the final battle of the Northern Resistance.

The Métis people came into existence as a result of the fur trade. They were the offspring of European traders and First Nations women, independent in spirit, living a lifestyle of hunting, trapping and freighting with trade and commercial endeavours.

Batoche was settled in the early 1870s by Métis. They had been forced to leave Manitoba's Red River settlement by federal government policies that ignored their rights in order to accommodate the anticipated flow of European settlers to the region.

The Red River Rebellion, which was led by Louis Riel, was touched off by federal surveyors who refused to acknowledge traditional Métis land holdings in that district.

Louis Riel is credited with leading negotiations that led, in 1870, to the establishment of Manitoba as Canada's fifth province, but ill feelings from the rebellion, coinciding with an influx of European settlers, extin-

guished a government pledge to give the Métis a 1.4-million-acre land base.

By 1884, Métis who had moved to the Batoche settlement on the South Saskatchewan River were encountering some of the same problems they experienced at Red River. In anticipation of white settlement, federal land surveyors were dividing up the Métis traditional riverfront lots using the square, range-and-township format employed in central Canada at the time.

With the disappearance of the buffalo, Métis calls for help in their transition to farming life and the education of their children were ignored by Ottawa.

The Métis were not alone in their grievances with central Canada. Cree Chief Big Bear was trying to establish a coalition of First Nations to negotiate more favourable treaty terms for the First Nations of the northwest, many of whom were starving and having trouble adjusting to a new way of life on the reserves. And white settlers in the region were angered that the federal government was treating them unfairly, especially with its decision to construct the new national railway more than 100 miles south of the proposed route.

Through the fall and bitter winter of 1884-85, Louis Riel attempted to negotiate with Ottawa not only on behalf of his Métis people but also on behalf of all the First Nations and white settlers of the region.

On March 19, 1885, he established a provisional government at Batoche, naming himself president and Gabriel Dumont military commander. The Métis pressed their cause by taking prisoners at Batoche and occupying nearby Duck Lake.

The first battle of the North-West Resistance—between Métis and First Nations forces and the North-West Mounted Police—occurred on March 26, 1885. Louis Riel's men forced their opponents to retreat. Riel himself limited casualties on the side of the North-West Mounted Police by forbidding his fighters from pursuing the retreating enemy.

Alarmed at the success of the North-West Resistance, Ottawa sent more than 5,000 troops under General Middleton.

Led by the agile commander Gabriel Dumont, the Métis excelled at guerrilla tactics as highly mobile fighters ready with their surprise strikes at lightning speed.

Dumont would have preferred to do battle with Middleton in accordance with these tried and true tactics, but it was Riel, who believed that God sided with the righteous cause of the Métis, who ordered that they should make a stand at Batoche. On May 15, 1885, Riel surrendered to the federal forces and was subsequently put on trial for treason. He was hanged later that year, on November 16.

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Today, Louis Riel is widely recognized as a father of Manitoba. November 16 has been declared Louis Riel Day in Canada, and Manitoba has recently renamed its Family Day holiday in February after him as well. As Canadians gain a deeper understanding of the cause of

the Métis and of the precipitating factors of the northwest conflict of 1885, greater momentum occurs for the complete rehabilitation and exoneration of Louis Riel.

Each year on November 16, members of the Métis Nation of Ontario gather on the grounds of the Parliament of Ontario here at Queen's Park, before the statue commemorating the northwest conflict, to celebrate the life and role of Louis Riel. I was proud to attend that ceremony this past fall. They all wear the familiar richly decorated Métis sash that I'm proud to wear in this House today in honour of our Métis Nation.

I would like to propose to all members of this House that the Ontario Legislature consider taking some proactive steps to likewise celebrate Métis heritage. We should consider renaming the statue of the Northwest Rebellion in honour of Louis Riel and the Métis Nation, and also consider placing a portrait of Louis Riel within the Legislative Building.

In addition, we could consider changing the name of the conflict to "Northwest Resistance," and that Louis Riel Day become a formal provincial day of observance in Ontario, with appropriate educational materials on Métis history and culture developed by the Ministry of Education for inclusion in the course of studies in all Ontario high schools. Finally, we could consider that the Métis sash be formally declared the Ontario provincial sash, alongside other Ontario insignia such as the Ontario tartan.

I offer these suggestions to the Premier and his government for their consideration and, perhaps, for consideration by a legislative committee, perhaps the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Métis were a people who hunted buffalo like their aboriginal brothers; created stores and businesses like their European relatives; valued the education of their children; cherished their independence; developed their own language, incorporating French and Cree; honoured their patron saint, Joseph; and enjoyed, and continue to enjoy today, a rich cultural life of festival, song and dance. Today they are making significant strides in their struggle to be recognized as a distinct people with land, economic and social rights similar to their First Nations counterparts.

We welcome representatives of some of the Métis nations here today and thank them for coming. We really do appreciate the opportunity we've had this afternoon to discuss these issues. In closing, I want to say that long after the final volley, the battle of Batoche continues.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to be here this afternoon to support the commemoration of 2010 as the Year of the Métis.

Gary Lipinski, it's really great to see you here today. Gary has done a great job as president of the Métis Nation of Ontario for the last few years. I want to acknowledge in this Legislature as well his predecessor, Tony Belcourt, who became a good friend of mine. Tony did a lot of work as well to support the growth of the Métis Nation in Ontario.

We've heard a lot of history today, but I want to talk about a couple of the fun things that happen with the

Métis Nation. I've had the opportunity to attend a number of general assemblies with the Métis Nation—I think a total of six over the years. They usually hold it each year in July at some community in Ontario; it could be a larger community or it could be a very rural community.

I want to talk about going up one time to Eagle Lake, just west of Kirkland Lake. My wife and I went there for three days and had a wonderful time. One of the nice things about the Métis Nation of Ontario is that they love their song and dance. They had us up dancing and playing to the fiddle, and I can tell you that they had two songs I'll always remember, the Jean Chrétien Break-down and the Ernie Eves Sidestep. They did them specifically for myself and one of the Liberal members who was there. They were two songs they played that day, and we had a wonderful time.

We've also had the general assembly in Penetanguishene, Ontario. And Gary, any time you want to bring the general assembly back to north Simcoe, you're very welcome. We'd love to have you there again. It's a great opportunity.

The reality is, in our community of Simcoe North, we have the largest concentration of self-identified Métis in the province of Ontario. There are over 2,000 members as we speak, but probably 5,600 could be identified in north Simcoe. They belong to the Georgian Bay Métis Council. Each and every year, they have a number of events that are fun to go to that really promote their heritage and their culture, one of course being the Christmas season, with the Christmas spirit we enjoy at their offices.

This year, on August 7, we have Métis Day at the historic Discovery Harbour in Penetanguishene. They have the whole grounds turned over to support the cultural events and show the history, the way food was cooked over the years, dance etc. It's a great, great day, and I would welcome anybody who wanted to take an afternoon to go up into Simcoe county to see Huronia Historical Parks and historic Discovery Harbour. They would really enjoy Métis Day—just kind of an ad at the same time.

Then, of course, on September 18 of this year we have what we call the Rendezvous gathering. It's held each year in the francophone community of Lafontaine. Métis Nation groups from all over Ontario visit Lafontaine—another fun day supporting the culture and heritage of the Métis here in Ontario.

I think the most important day of the year for the Métis Nation is November 16. I know a number of us have attended the events here at Queen's Park.

I fully support some of the suggestions made by my colleague Ted Arnott, the critic for aboriginal affairs. I think some of the ideas he's had, particularly with the renaming of the statue, are long overdue. It's time for the government, the opposition and the third party to all support these sorts of initiatives. I think it would be very well supported by the Métis Nation as well.

I want to welcome you all here today, along with my colleagues in the PC Party. We really support this commemoration today. I hope it's a great year, and I hope everybody gets out to as many Métis Nation events as possible this year to see the fine culture, history and heritage of this group.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Timmins–James Bay.

It's my great pleasure to speak on behalf of New Democrats in support of this motion declaring 2010 the Year of the Métis in Ontario, and to also welcome the members of the Métis Nation who have come to Queen's Park today to celebrate with us.

The story of Canada, of our country's emergence as a nation, cannot be truly told without reference to the Métis people. They are a nation literally born out of the momentous meeting between European colonists and aboriginal nations. All schoolchildren are taught the grand foundational stories of the fur trade and the buffalo hunt and how crucial both were to the growth of our nation and the opening up of the West. But too often, the central role of the Métis in that history is glossed over or given only passing reference.

In truth, the Métis were involved in every facet of the fur trade, acting as trappers, guides, interpreters, merchants, agents, voyageurs and many other roles. They hunted buffalo to make pemmican in order to feed outlying communities and trading posts. They shared the knowledge of the land that they had learned from their aboriginal elders with the newcomers, who were often unprepared for survival in the climate of the northwest.

The demise of the buffalo and the decline in the fur trade, combined with the annexation of the northwest by the Canadian government, brought about an end to the traditional economy of the Métis. The Red River Rebellion of 1869 grew out of the Métis desire to protect their rights and way of life against an aggressive and distant government.

Louis Riel, the Métis leader of that rebellion, is regarded as a hero to a great many Canadians today, and as one of our country's pioneering champions for minority rights. His legacy and unjust execution at the hands of the federal government of the day, following the Northwest Rebellion, is remembered each year in ceremonies across the country on Louis Riel Day—including ceremonies here at Queen's Park, which I've had the pleasure of attending.

The Manitoba Act of 1870, which created the province of Manitoba, recognized Métis claim to aboriginal title. The Dominion Lands Act of 1879 recognized that claim as well. The federal government, however, unilaterally extinguished these claims through individual land and grants scrip. Denied the recognition of their collective rights, the Métis became Canada's "forgotten people."

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While they may for a time have slipped from view, the Métis people did not disappear. They have remained a vibrant, engaged and active community. In the years

since the Red River Rebellion and the Northwest Rebellion, the Métis have distinguished themselves, not only in their steadfast defence of their community and rights but also through their active engagement with the larger community. In the same spirit that motivated their ancestors to teach hapless settlers the skills they needed to survive on the harsh prairie, Métis have continued to make a valuable contribution to our province and country. They are decorated veterans of past conflicts who continue to serve with distinction in Canada's armed forces. Métis have distinguished themselves in fields as diverse as music, medicine, industry, education, art and the law.

The Métis of Ontario have been an important voice speaking out for the need to take care of our natural environment. In fact, I expected the member for Simcoe North to mention this, but I was very proud to stand with many Métis people and talk to them during the protests around the site 41 landfill problem that was occurring there. We saw the Métis people very much engaged in that fight against dump site 41, again speaking out on the environment as they have always done.

It is only fitting that we honour a people who have been such a crucial part of our history, who have given us so much and who continue to make a significant contribution to making Ontario a fairer and more just place. They deserve to have a year named in their honour—absolutely.

I believe, however, that naming 2010 the Year of the Métis in Ontario is not the only thing that we should be doing. Though recognized by the Constitution of 1982 as one of Canada's aboriginal people, the Métis have never received the benefits governments grant to status Indians and Inuit. In its final report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated, "It is unjust and unreasonable to withhold from Métis people the services and opportunities available to other aboriginal peoples."

Here in Ontario, we have only in the last few years reached an agreement with Métis people confirming their right to harvest animals for food within their traditional territories. Simple justice calls out to us to speak in one voice and to call on the federal government once and for all to end this discrimination. It is the right thing to do. It is the fair and just thing to do. It's a simple gesture of thanks for the priceless contribution the Métis have made to our history and to our nation.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais m'exprimer, comme le critique en matière des affaires autochtones de la part du caucus NPD, pendant cette journée qu'on prend aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée pour donner nos vues, nos déclarations, même nos pensées et tous les autres rêves qu'on peut avoir comme citoyen de cette province, mais spécialement pour ceux qui sont Métis.

Vous savez que la langue des Métis était le cri ou d'autres langues autochtones et le français. C'est pour cette raison que je veux faire ma déclaration en français.

C'est intéressant aujourd'hui, à cette Assemblée, qu'on prend chacun 15 minutes, chaque caucus, pour s'exprimer pendant cette journée importante. Ce n'est pas

pour dire que ce n'est pas important, ni pour dire que ce n'est pas apprécié, parce que je suis sûr que mes amis, mes collègues, tels que France Picotte et d'autres qui sont ici aujourd'hui, vont dire que c'est une journée spéciale. Il faut remercier le gouvernement et M^{me} Smith pour avoir accordé les 15 minutes.

Je veux dire que c'est beau de dire de belles paroles, mais on sait qu'il y a beaucoup de boulot et beaucoup de chemin à faire. On sait que la communauté métisse à travers cette province, ainsi qu'au Manitoba et dans d'autres provinces, œuvrent pour trouver leur place dans cette province qui est égale aux autres dans cette province quand ça vient à beaucoup de matières.

On regarde les efforts des Métis à travers la province, quand ça vient au développement économique. C'est quoi l'histoire? La majorité du monde dans la communauté métisse se trouve, en comparaison, un peu—comment dire?—moindre, quand ça vient à l'égalité économique et sociale dans cette province.

Puis on se demande la question : « Pourquoi? ». Ce n'est pas la faute de ce gouvernement, ni du gouvernement avant celui-là, mais je pense que c'est la faute de nous tous comme citoyens qui n'ont pas vu que c'était nécessaire que tous les peuples dans cette province, Métis inclus, aient l'habileté de trouver leur place dans cette province quand ça vient à l'économie.

On voit qu'il y a beaucoup d'intérêt ces jours-ci, spécialement dans le nord de l'Ontario, quand ça vient aux ressources naturelles. On a entendu parler du « Ring of Fire », puis on a entendu parler d'autres projets comme le « Victor diamond mine », De Beers, Musselwhite et d'autres projets qu'on voit. Mais où est la place pour les Métis dans tous ces projets? On n'a pas encore aujourd'hui en place dans cette province, en cette année, quelque chose d'aussi simple que de dire qu'il y aura un partage des revenus quand ça vient à ces projets, non simplement pour les autochtones, mais aussi pour les Métis, où ça fait du bon sens.

Quant à moi, si on veut faire le développement dans ces parties-là de la province, on sait que la majorité du monde qui demeure là est qui? Ce sont les autochtones; ce sont les Métis. Ce sont eux autres qui sont là chaque jour et qui œuvrent dans des situations assez déplorables pour trouver une vie pour eux et pour leur famille. On a besoin, nous dans cette Assemblée, non seulement de prendre 15 minutes pour donner nos déclarations, pour dire, « On est content de signaler la contribution des Métis », mais de dire ce que chacun de nous va faire, ce qu'on va faire comme membre individuel de cette Assemblée, ce qu'on va faire comme chefs de parti et ce qu'on va faire comme parlementaires pour assurer qu'on peut avancer la situation pour les Métis et les autochtones dans cette province.

Vous le savez : beaucoup d'entre vous ont passé à travers les communautés et vous avez vu, vous avez visité, vous avez mangé, vous avez été au souper, vous avez été aux événements avec les Métis et les autochtones de cette province, et ce qu'on trouve, franchement, est épouvantable. On voit de la pauvreté ici en

Ontario comme on n'en croirait pas, à moins que tu sois là toi-même. Si tu regardes les communautés autochtones à travers cette province, c'est une pauvreté qui est vraiment fessante. C'est remarquable, que c'est encore la situation aujourd'hui dans ce pays.

Qu'est-ce qu'on va faire comme parlementaires et comme Assemblée pour s'assurer qu'on peut trouver des solutions à moyen terme et à long terme? On sait que les autochtones et les Métis ont de la patience. Ça fait des années qu'ils attendent leur jour au soleil, comme mon bon ami M. Pouliot disait déjà. Mais l'affaire, c'est qu'on veut savoir un temps assez raisonnable où le Parlement de l'Ontario et le Parlement du Canada vont prendre des mesures et vont faire ce qui est nécessaire pour avancer la situation pour nos peuples autochtones et Métis dans cette province et dans ce pays, pour s'assurer que les petites filles et les petits garçons qui sont nés dans nos familles vont avoir la chance d'avoir un emploi, quand ils auront 19, 20 ou 22 ans, qui est plus qu'un emploi où on travaille seulement comme journalier quelque part sur un projet minier, ou comme journalier sur un projet quelque part dans le nord de l'Ontario ou dans le sud de l'Ontario. Ils veulent avoir l'opportunité d'avoir une éducation pour dire qu'on peut faire la concurrence et la compétition avec n'importe qui, et qu'on peut être fier de dire : « Je suis Métis; je suis autochtone », et trouver sa place dans cette province.

Mais, mes amis parlementaires, ça ne va pas arriver avec des mots seulement. Ça ne va pas arriver avec de belles déclarations qu'on fait ici à l'Assemblée, même avec les miennes. Ça va devenir la réalité quand on se dit que c'est l'affaire à faire ce qui est juste et bonne pour tous les citoyens de cette province, y inclus les Métis et les autochtones.

On veut s'assurer que les petits gars et les petites filles qui sont élevés vont avoir une bonne éducation et qu'ils peuvent faire la concurrence avec les autres dans cette province. On veut s'assurer que les questions environnementales qui ont besoin d'être regardées d'une manière très sérieuse pour s'assurer que les projets qui sont faits dans leurs communautés, comme dans d'autres, sont pris au sérieux, et qu'on peut prendre leur éducation et leur pensée et leur être, comme personne—c'est ce qui est important quand ça vient à protéger cet environnement. Et, je dois dire, qu'on peut contourner l'assimilation, parce que, franchement, c'est ça ce qui se passe. On voit une assimilation dans les communautés autochtones; on l'a vue dans la communauté Métis comme on ne le croirait pas.

Il n'y a pas un francophone dans cette Assemblée, moi-même inclus, qui ne peut pas dire qu'il vient d'une communauté autochtone d'une manière ou d'une autre. Mon grand-père était autochtone. Je ne m'appelle pas Métis parce que j'étais assimilé. Et c'est un problème. J'ai compris, comme francophone, dès le début, quand j'ai commencé à travailler, que c'était plus facile à demeurer en Ontario et devenir anglophone. Donc, tu t'en vas avec les anglophones, puis tu espères qu'une bonne journée, tu vas être capable d'avancer avec le reste

du gang, comme ils disent. Mais ça m'a pris un point dans ma vie pour réaliser que j'étais francophone et que j'avais besoin de trouver ma place, comme francophone, en Ontario.

Le même a besoin d'être dit pour les Métis, parce que l'assimilation qui est arrivée avec les Métis depuis des années, pendant les deux dernières siècles, est vraie, et on peut la voir concrètement dans nos communautés. Combien de familles et d'individus à travers cette province viennent d'une ligne autochtone mais ne le disent pas? Ce n'est pas parce qu'ils en ont peur. Dans cette société aujourd'hui, on n'a pas peur de ces affaires-là. Ce n'est pas parce qu'on pense que c'est une méchante affaire. C'est parce qu'on était assimilé, puis on ne sait pas où aller.

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Une des autres affaires, je pense, qu'on a besoin de voir, c'est comment on peut contourner cette assimilation dans notre province et s'assurer que les Métis dans cette province sont capables de trouver leur place.

Donc, je demande aux membres de l'Assemblée qui sont ici et aux autres—je sais qu'ils travaillent très fort aujourd'hui à leur bureau—de dire qu'on ne va pas seulement faire des déclarations, qu'on ne va pas seulement donner de beaux mots, mais qu'on va prendre des mesures concrètes pour que la vie des autochtones et des Métis dans cette province puissent avancer d'une manière que l'on peut regarder et dire, as Churchill said, that this was “our finest hour.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved that this House commemorates 2010 as the Year of the Métis and that the Ontario Legislature recognizes and honours the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people in the province, as well as the historic and ongoing contributions of the Métis in Ontario.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition des gens de Sudbury et de Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to ... cardiac patients,” under certain conditions, and cancer patients; and

“Whereas” since “October 2009, insured PET scans” are “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly” as follows: “to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page Darcy.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: “Whereas Natural Resources Canada has cancelled the ecoEnergy Retrofit for homes program and the Ontario government has committed to matching grants up to \$5,000;

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

“Commit to the continuance of the provincial portion of the ecoEnergy grants.”

I agree with this petition, and I'm pleased to affix my signature and pass it to my page, Carrington.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 POSANT LES FONDATIONS DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts / Projet de loi 16, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2010 et édictant ou modifiant diverses lois.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I was able to start my leadoff speech last week and I look forward today to concluding that leadoff speech.

There's a lot to cover before we go into the details of this budget, this bill, G16. Before I go into the details of the budget itself, I want to say that a lot has happened since I was last standing here in this chamber. A lot has happened with the company that was hired by the Liberal government to advise it on the privatization of some of the largest, most critical assets that exist in the public sector in this province.

Today, the Premier of this province, Dalton McGuinty, gave another vote of confidence to the company Goldman Sachs, which was hired for \$200,000 to do an assessment of the sale of Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and Ontario Lottery and Gaming.

Since I last spoke in this House, Goldman Sachs has been charged with fraud by the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. For your information, Madam Speaker, and for the record, I think people should know what was reported in Reuters about Goldman Sachs and their performance, because frankly, they are

handling a very critical file. They are playing with the future stability, the future revenue, of this province. If in fact they have recommendations that are going to come forward, people should know what kind of company makes those recommendations.

Reuters reports: "The civil lawsuit" by the Securities and Exchange Commission "is the biggest crisis in years for a company that faced criticism over its pay and business practices after emerging from the global financial meltdown as Wall Street's most influential bank." Many other banks were left tattered by that global financial collapse, but Goldman Sachs did well. They did very well.

"It may also make it more difficult for the industry to beat back calls for reform as lawmakers in Washington debate an overhaul of financial regulations." Clearly, the performance of Goldman Sachs and the other companies that it worked with on Wall Street demanded action for regulation. It's a shame—it's tragic, in fact, that the regulation wasn't in place there a decade ago. But in fact a decade ago the regulation was being broken apart. That deregulation mania, one which continued on under the Bush administration, let Goldman Sachs do some very interesting things with the world's economy.

"Goldman called the lawsuit 'completely unfounded,' adding, 'We did not structure a portfolio that was designed to lose money.'" An interesting response to the charge, and one that people should keep in mind as they watch this story unfold.

"The lawsuit puts Goldman chief executive Lloyd Blankfein further on the defensive after he told the federal Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission in January that the bank packaged complex debt, while also betting against the debt, because clients had the appetite.

"We are not a fiduciary," he said."

It's interesting here. He says, "Yes, we have these very complex debt instruments. We packaged them up, we sold them to people and we bet against them at the same time. We didn't think that those packages would stand up. We thought that they would fold, that they would crash, and we bought insurance for that folding, that crashing. We are not a fiduciary," he says. "We don't have a responsibility to look out for the well-being of the customers." There's an old saying; it's Latin—we don't use Latin much in the House—caveat emptor, "buyer beware." Yet we in this House, an unwritten part of the budget we are debating today, have hired this company to advise on the disposition of \$60 billion worth of provincial assets, assets that generate \$4 billion a year in revenue, assets in Hydro One and OPG that are the levers that you need to shape the energy future of this province. We've hired this company to advise us—not "we"; Dalton McGuinty has hired this company to advise him on how to take this province forward. That should make people sit up and listen. They should notice what kind of advisers have been put onto the payroll.

Reuters gives more detail: "The case also involves John Paulson, a hedge fund investor whose firm Paulson & Co. made billions of dollars by betting the nation's

housing market would crash." He seems like a business person who understands the economy he's operating in. "This included an estimated \$1 billion from the transaction detailed in the lawsuit, which the SEC said cost other investors more than \$1 billion. Paulson was not charged....

"Goldman shares slid 12.8% on Friday, closing down \$23.57 ... on the New York Stock Exchange. The decline wiped out more than \$12 billion of market value, and trading volume topped 100 million shares, Reuters data show."

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I would say that major investors in the United States have spoken about their confidence in this company. Major investors have looked at the Securities and Exchange Commission, looked at what is going on in the rest of the world—I'll comment on that in a few minutes—and decided that maybe putting all these bets on Goldman Sachs isn't a good idea. One could only hope that the Premier, when he considers continuing to deal with this company, looks at how the rest of the world views these charges. They're not light; they're not casual; they're not fluffy. They're substantial and sequential.

Reuters goes on to say, "The perceived risk of owning Goldman debt, as measured by credit default swaps, increased. Treasury prices rose as investors sought safe-haven government debt."

In other words, people who had money in Goldman Sachs were running for the doors. They were going to buy treasury bonds or government money so their money would be safe. Are we continuing to have Goldman Sachs on the payroll advising us? Why, in this very chamber this morning the Premier indeed affirmed that we are. As I said in response to his question, I'm sure Goldman Sachs is greatly comforted that there's one politician on this planet who will stand up for them. I'm not that politician; the Premier of this province is.

Reuters goes on to say, under "More Severe than Expected"—that's a nice little headline—"These charges are far more severe than anyone had imagined," and suggest Goldman teamed with 'the leading short-seller in the industry to design a portfolio of securities that would crash,' said John Coffee, a securities law professor at Columbia Law School in New York."

That's a pretty strong statement, a pretty strong charge: A billion-dollar lawsuit is a big lawsuit.

Mr. Coffee goes on to say, "'The greatest penalty for Goldman is not the financial damages—Goldman is enormously wealthy—but the reputational damage,' he said, adding that 'it's not impossible' to contemplate that the case could lead to criminal charges."

Yes, Madam Speaker and members of the Legislature, the company that is advising this province on how to deal with \$60 billion of its most precious assets is being sued for \$1 billion by the Securities and Exchange Commission, and is a company about whose reputation prominent academics say it's not impossible that criminal charges

will be laid. That's where the confidence of this province has been placed.

"Goldman vowed to defend itself." Quoting Goldman spokesperson, "'The SEC's charges are completely unfounded in law and fact,' it said. 'We will vigorously contest them and defend the firm and its reputation.'"

"Defend ... its reputation": Those are wonderful words. To talk a bit about their reputation, I go to quotes from the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, a committee of Congress that has been charged to look into exactly why the world economy went over a cliff a few short years ago. At that congressional hearing just last week, emails were read from people who were fairly senior in the financial services sector in the United States. They're on the record:

"Emails from former Washington Mutual Inc. CEO Kerry Killinger read aloud during a congressional hearing this week illustrated clients' concerns about working with Goldman.

"In 2007, Killinger," the CEO of Washington Mutual, a fairly large company, "discussed hiring Goldman or another investment bank to help Washington Mutual find ways to reduce its credit risk or raise new capital, according to one of the e-mails, which Michigan Democratic Senator Carl Levin read during the hearing."

Levin quotes from the emails: "'I don't trust Goldie on this,' Levin quoted one of Killinger's emails as saying. 'They are smart, but this is swimming with the sharks. They were shorting mortgages big time while they were giving [Countrywide Financial Corp.] advice.'"

What does that mean? It means while they were advising a company, Countrywide Financial, on how to sell subprime mortgages, mortgages that had little chance of being paid back, mortgages that were weak on a variety of levels, at the same time they were placing bets in the financial markets that those mortgages would blow up.

That's the kind of company that senior executives in the United States refer to as "sharks," yet they've been hired by this province to analyze our public assets and advise on their disposal. That's who we hired. Others in North America and around the world have some sense of who they're dealing with, but apparently we don't.

We have a situation where the Securities and Exchange Commission is saying that Goldman Sachs put together a financial deal and didn't provide "vital information" to customers. So you have to ask yourself: Will Goldman Sachs, paid \$200,000 and probably more than that by this province, actually give us vital information about what they're really going to do with our assets? I think that's an open question. I would say, based on their history, one should be extraordinarily careful.

Yesterday, Sunday, the Times of London reported that in the UK, the Financial Services Authority is investigating Goldman Sachs. They write:

"FSA Probe into Goldman Sachs 'Fraud.'"

"The city watchdog is to examine the American case against the Wall Street giant as demands grow for a full inquiry."

So far, leaders of two of three of Britain's main political parties are calling for an inquiry into Goldman Sachs and their dealings with the UK and the financial sector.

"The city watchdog has launched a probe into the London operations of Goldman Sachs after shock claims that the giant international bank orchestrated a \$1-billion ... fraud against investors. Investigators from the Financial Services Authority are liaising with their American counterparts at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which took action against the bank in a New York court on Friday...."

"It is understood the FSA is examining trades similar to the transaction that prompted the legal challenge from the American regulator."

So it isn't as though Goldman Sachs is engaged in activity only in the United States that causes government authorities to want to investigate its activities. No, on two continents, in a variety of countries, it has attracted the interest of lawmakers.

I need to throw this in because I thought it was one of the more delightful parts of the report: "The allegations against Goldman come ahead of bumper first-quarter results that will be revealed on Tuesday. The bank is expected to set aside \$5.5 billion in pay and bonuses for its staff."

Here's a company that seems to be doing fairly well—\$5.5 billion in bonuses. It makes the sunshine list in this province look like a list of kids' allowances. We're talking real money here: a billion here, a billion there.

We're helping them get richer. We're giving them the keys to all the financial records we have, all our data, so they can essentially do their own internal search of our financial situation. We pay them to do that.

I speak to this because this budget is not complete. This budget document before us doesn't reflect the plans of the government.

If you go back to the Globe and Mail column by Adam Radwanski about a week and a half ago, he talked about a meeting between the Premier and the editorial board of the Globe and Mail, where the Premier talked about this sale, talked about not wanting to look as though he was engaged in a process of burning the furniture to heat the house—although in fact that's all you can do, really, in this. That's what this is all about. He was looking for a place to put the money so it would look good.

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So, whatever we go through in this bill, either somewhere buried in the bill is an expectation of a large chunk of cash that's going to come from this operation or some other substantial financial transaction is going to happen coming out of all of that.

So, for us, when we talk about a bill that is partial, that stands between us and a clear view of the many sins of this government, this is a very substantial example.

I just want to note as well that the government of Germany, which had to deal with threats to its banking system, has asked the Securities and Exchange Com-

mission for detail and that the European Union is already investigating the monetary deals between Goldman Sachs and Greece earlier this decade—monetary deals whose ripple effect, whose consequences may destabilize one of the major currencies of the world, the euro. That's the kind of company that we have on the payroll.

Now, having talked about the quality of thinking that has gone into the financial planning in this province, the quality of consultants that have been hired to give this government advice on where to go forward on financial matters, I want to talk about some details in the budget itself.

In this budget, there's virtually nothing that deals with climate change, and yet this is a government that has said time and again that dealing with climate change is critical for this society, critical for this government and its priorities. When you go through this budget—and I have a copy of the document before me—there's only one small reference to climate change. For your information, Speaker, and for the information of those who may be watching us today, I just want to read an excerpt from the budget.

“As a leader in the green economy,”—so it claims—“Ontario is looking to the federal government to substantially extend its funding commitments for the environment, beyond carbon capture and storage projects, to support Ontario's transition to a prosperous low-carbon economy. The province calls on the federal government to show leadership on climate change, to help Ontario businesses take advantage of the changes that are coming to the North American market and to help create jobs for Ontarians.”

And that's it; it's over. If you blinked when it went past, you would have missed it. Yet this government, time and again, has put forward the claim that it's a leader on climate change. If in fact there was a substantial investment in this budget that would address climate change concerns, it would have been trumpeted everywhere.

What we have in this budget, rather than investment, is a little paragraph saying, “Stephen Harper, do something.” That's not climate change action, and that's not climate change leadership; that is simply making sure that you can say, “In our budget, we said something about climate change.”

I'll say this to you as well, Speaker. Page 129, for those who want to dig through it—I had to dig through; it doesn't even make it on the index of topics. It's set aside.

This matters because in a budget you actually say to the world, “What are my priorities? Where will I put my money? Is it anywhere close to where my mouth is?” In fact, in this budget, climate change is not addressed other than, as I say, a little note to Stephen Harper: “Be good. Do something green today.”

In Quebec, they allocate \$200 million a year to dealing with climate change. They have policies that state how they will reach their climate change targets. It's a five-year plan. They're trying to meet their Kyoto commitments. We don't have an allocation of cash in this

budget. We don't have policies spelling out how we will meet our targets.

In fact, if you look at the report that came out from the climate secretariat and the Minister of the Environment—whose seat is right there. If you looked at that when it came out before Christmas, you would see a very glossy report with a very powerful message, and that powerful message was, “We're not going to meet our climate targets.” That's a shocking message. It was a lot grimmer than the full-colour, glossy pages of the report that was presented. It was a conclusion that was completely contrary to the arguments and the rhetoric that have been put forward by this government. There are no counter-balances to that report in this budget. In fact, this budget goes backward. It rolls back the clock of action that has to be taken on climate change.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, shortly before Christmas, looked at the climate plan and noted that it wasn't going to meet its targets, noted that it was very vague in terms of exactly what steps would be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One of the things he talked about—the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario—was the fact that dealing with emissions from transportation was critical to the success of any plan that Ontario could put forward.

In order to deal with transportation greenhouse gas emissions, you have to deal with urban form and urban planning; you have to make sure that the infrastructure is there to allow for the development of rapid transit, for cycling and for walking. This budget could speak to that. It could talk to investments in infrastructure for non-car transportation, but it doesn't; it is silent.

If you look at the report of the Pembina Institute on the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan, what it shows is that 60% of new growth over the next few decades is going to be on what are called greenfields—farmland, land that was not previously urbanized. If you do that, there are substantial impacts in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, sickness and death. All of those things are tied up, and in this budget, they are unaddressed.

Last week in question period, the Premier was asked how much money would be saved by cutting Transit City. In the budget that we're dealing with, a promise made to expand the transit system in the city of Toronto has been broken. The Premier has consistently said, “It's just being delayed. No, no, everything's fine. Don't you worry. Have a seat; have a lollipop. Be happy.” What the Premier said in answer to the question was that this government would save \$4 billion in its cuts to Transit City. That's a lot of money. A \$4-billion cut means many lines not built. The Premier may be telling the truth when he says it's delayed, but unless you've heard differently, I don't know—delayed till what date? I don't think anyone else knows.

The mayor of the city of Toronto considers that it has been cut. Frankly, if things don't get started before the next election, given the vagaries of political life in Ontario, who knows if and when this so-called delay will

come to an end and the money will be spent? I would say that, for practical purposes, for our purposes, we should treat it as a cut.

If you look at the reality in the greater Toronto area, congestion now costs us \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year. That's a huge burden on the economic life of this region. That is a lot of money. It's half the size of the budget of the city of Toronto. Yet, instead of making the investment that would have put people to work and have them pay taxes, and instead of making the investment that would have allowed people to get to work in a timely way, giving them more time to live their lives and increasing the chances that they could look for jobs further and further afield, we've had a cut.

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New Canadians who live in the inner suburbs of the city of Toronto are going to take a hit. They will spend more time waiting for transit on cold corners in January and February when they should be on fast-moving streetcars, light rail vehicles that will take them from their homes to the subway system to work. They need to understand that this budget, with this cut, is reinforcing the social divides in this city, making it more difficult for low-income new Canadians to build the kind of life they want to live, making it more difficult for people who have cars to get around, and making things more difficult for those who have asthma or any kind of lung disease.

The Toronto Star, which is generally very supportive of this government and its budget, has been pointing out that what is called a deferral of spending is a mistake and will have negative impacts on the GTA and Ontario's economy. They pointed out in an article following the announcement of the decision that the withdrawal of funds for bus replacement will mean a reduction in service.

When you listen to the Premier or to his Minister of Finance, they will tell you that, yes, the budget for bus and streetcar replacement has been cut, but now municipalities can pay for it from the gas tax. What I say to you, Speaker, is that it just means that the pocket of money available to fund transit has been cut, not just for Transit City but for transit systems across the province. Ottawa, Kingston, London, Windsor, Thunder Bay and Sudbury are all going to take a hit because this government has decided to cut back on transit. That will force more people into their cars for longer drives, when this government says it is completely against that direction. This budget is a rollback of commitment to public transit, to the environment and to action on climate change.

If you ask the Premier or the Minister of Transportation about these cuts, what you hear back is a recitation of all the investments that have been made and all the good works claimed by this government. The Toronto Star, again, in response to those particular comments, said in an editorial that the answer was an embarrassment. The reality is that the investment is inadequate to the needs of the GTA, inadequate to the needs of this very large urban area and, frankly, inadequate to the needs of other urban areas in Ontario.

When you make a decision like this to cut critical investment in one area, you drive up costs in another area. Our critic for health, France Gélinas, can talk to you about the pressure on emergency rooms and on doctors' waiting rooms because people come in with respiratory diseases, asthma and heart disease, all related to air pollution. This decision will mean more people in emergency rooms, more people sick and, frankly, more people dying.

This is a decision where we need a change of heart from the Premier. We need the Premier to say very clearly, "This budget needs to be amended. This cut to Transit City is not sustainable, not defensible and has to be rolled back." That would be a good move on the part of the Premier that would elicit support from municipalities and citizens across this province.

People know that this is a tough budget and these are tough times. But a rollback of investment in public transit cannot be defended on any level—on any level. If you look at the polling that was published in the Toronto Star in the last few days asking people in the GTA what their big concerns are, transit is right at the top, because people are concerned about the air and concerned about getting around.

I want to go on to talk about the full-day learning plan. I think that what was brought forward by Dr. Charles Pascal made a lot of sense. As you would well know, Speaker, because you represent an area with a large population of young families, parents desperately need good-quality, affordable public daycare. So bringing forward a plan for full daycare makes a lot of sense, has a lot of positive outcomes.

What Dr. Pascal brought forward was an integrated plan for early childhood learning across this province. What he had done in his plan was to integrate it with early childhood education, making sure we had a system from early life on, through school, so that parents and children got the best. That made a lot of sense. If you'll remember, he said that you need to implement the whole plan. For it to work, it has to be integrated. All the pieces have to be there or you get into some very profound problems. He was right, because what we're seeing now—and I'm getting it from constituents in my riding; my guess is that others are getting it from constituents in their ridings—is that the plan as proposed puts in place huge problems for existing non-profit care. For people whose daycare centres are looking after four-year-olds and five-year-olds, they're finding that those kids will be moved out, they will lose subsidy spaces, and they will lose the number of kids that they can spread the cost of their administration over. So they have a much smaller economic base to operate from. That means financial crisis. That is a tremendous problem.

There's no question that full-day learning is a positive thing and needs to be expanded across Ontario. But right now, parents, daycare workers and children are in a situation of upheaval, a situation creating anxiety, a situation in which they don't know what kind of care is going to be there a year from now or, frankly, in

September. Things are moving very fast. It's April now. You know that in order to put in place a program and make sure all the funding is allocated intelligently, is accounted for, and that people are hired or moved from one position to another, it takes months, and yet we're not seeing that. What we've seen in this budget is a cherry-picking of some of the best parts of Dr. Pascal's report without the implementation of the network necessary to make sure that it functions well. That is a huge problem.

I've had a chance to talk about transit, climate change, daycare and this Premier's wrong-headed moves to allow a very controversial company to get its hands on the books of this province, but I also want to talk about the special diet. The move in this budget to eliminate the special diet for those on Ontario Works or ODSB is morally wrong, economically wrong, and wrong in terms of the health care of this province. It's short-sighted. It doesn't understand the needs of those who are very poor and working, trying to live in very difficult circumstances. People who are on welfare, who have a medical condition and who are going to lose their special diet allowance or have it cut back dramatically are going to find it very difficult to live.

A few years ago, in fact when I was running in 2006 in the by-election, I was in a coffee shop taking a break between rounds of canvassing. A young woman came up to me, well dressed, neat, clearly someone who had worked a good part of her life, well educated when she spoke. She was very thin. She came up, introduced herself and asked if I indeed was the candidate who was running. I said yes, I was. She said, "You need to know we are hungry. I'm disabled, and I'm hungry." People like her who are on disability support who have medical conditions, who need a special diet to keep their lives held together, who need more food so that the medical conditions they're dealing with don't become more profound, are facing a crisis.

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This announcement is a cruel announcement. It means that people are right now living with anxiety and trepidation about their future, as if they didn't have all kinds of other problems on their plates.

If, in fact, this government doesn't change course, does cut the special diet allowance, then I can tell you right now that more people will wind up in hospitals and in emergency rooms because they will not have had enough food to sustain their health. Chronic conditions will become acute. Long-term difficult problems will sharpen into crises. It is not wise economically or socially and it is not morally defensible to cut the food allowance for some of the most vulnerable people in this province, but that's what is on the table. It puts a huge burden on individuals and will put a huge burden on this society.

Just the other day, my colleague Michael Prue asked a question about social assistance, and I'll quote the exchange because I thought it was very useful.

"Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. On February 17, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal ordered

the government to increase special diet allowance rates for special assistance recipients with various medical conditions within three months. Instead of increasing those rates, the McGuinty government, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, is asking for a one-year extension so it can eliminate the special diet allowance and reduce the same benefits that were awarded."

Michael Prue asked, "Why won't the government comply with the Ontario Human Rights Commission ruling and provide adequate special diet allowance payments as ordered?"

My colleague from Beaches–East York has had a long history of fighting for those who are poor, bringing their concerns to the attention of the public and doing his best to make sure that people whose lives are already difficult and desperate are not made even more difficult, more desperate.

That question was deflected to Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services, and she replied, "This is a very good question. The government will comply with the decision of the Human Rights Tribunal. We need more time to investigate and to see who qualifies for this new addition, to respect the decision of the human rights. That's the only reason we will comply with the decision of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal."

Michael Prue was very direct in his response. He said, "That is not the case at all. The assistant deputy minister has filed an affidavit that set out exactly the opposite of what you have just said: that they are asking for the year in order to eliminate the program."

As you know from this budget, the program is going to be gone. That's what's happening. There is a substantial cut being put on the table—part of this budget. That's the reality.

Michael Prue went on, "This minister is refusing to answer the question. She implies that the current special diet allowance is not medically based, and she has said that before. Of course it is. Recipients must have specific medical conditions in order to receive the allowance."

If the government doesn't believe that people have those specific medical conditions, then they should interview the people who are receiving the allowances. They should talk to the doctors. But on a wholesale basis, to eliminate the special diet allowance for this vulnerable population is not defensible.

Michael Prue goes on to say, "The tribunal decision clearly states that the special diet allowances are inadequate. This arrogant government responds by doing away with the allowance altogether and effectively cutting the special assistance rates up to 20%. This is nothing less than cruelty. Why does this government think it is above the decision of the Human Rights Tribunal?"

I think that's the right question to ask, because the fate and well-being of many thousands of people are at stake.

Madeleine Meilleur replied, "The question that was asked by my colleague was: Why have we asked for

some time? First of all, you're partly right. We will appeal part of the decision, but there is another part that we will comply with, so we're asking for more time. Why are we asking for more time? It's because we need to review all the applications for a part of the special diet, and we need more time. We'll appeal one part, but the other part we will comply with, and we need more time to make the right decision and give those claimants what they deserve under the decision of the human rights."

The human rights tribunal has found that the diet is inadequate. They have found that people are not getting the nutrition that they need to live. They found that this government needs to take action. The response in this budget, in this document, is to cut. That is not defensible. It is simply not defensible.

When you look at this budget, you can in your ears hear the Premier speaking. He delivers the well-worn refrain that Ontario must adopt new ways of thinking to keep up with the times and move on with the future. That's one of the favourite things that he has to say. He'll say that old ideas are a thing of the past; we have to build a prosperous Ontario and build our prosperity with new thinking, not the old ideas of the past. That's what the Premier is constantly telling us. How can one argue against having new ideas? It sounds good. The real question is, what is the content of those ideas? When you look at the content of this budget, given the language that the Premier uses, we see that the prescription the Premier has brought forward is really, truly rooted in those very old ideas that haven't worked, tired ideas that actually paved the way for the very recession we're trying to crawl out of right now, that has created so much hardship for so many families that are still struggling today in Ontario.

As I said earlier, in fairness, there's no politician in this chamber who wouldn't say that this is a difficult time to bring forward a budget; that's the simple reality. The challenge of getting this province back on track and ensuring a brighter future for those people who are having trouble today is an important one. People have struggled a great deal during these very difficult times. I don't think any of us should underestimate exactly how difficult it's going to be to get us back on track. I think it will be very difficult. We have many years of wrong-headed decisions, of going down dead ends, of providing funding for that which doesn't need funding and cutting funds from those things that are critical. The magnitude of the job before us is significant, and the concern that people have when you go and talk to them is great.

Madam Speaker, as I'm sure you do when you go door to door and talk to people in your community, you hear about the anxieties that they have, the concerns that they face, the worries that burden their day-to-day lives. We know that this recession we have been going through, and which is not over, has had a huge impact on people's lives, has kicked the legs out from under many a person who has tried to put their life on track, tried to make sure that they had everything in place for a future. You don't need to look at the budget pages, and you don't need to

look at the fancy graphs; you just have to go and talk to the people of this province. This budget is not going to solve their worries—no budget could solve everyone's worries—but is it taking the province in the direction it needs to go? It doesn't meet that test. If a budget, in fact, falls short in one measure here or one measure there, I think the people of this province and all the parties in this House would say, "All right; it falls short in this or that measure." But when the core of the budget is one in which the long-term viability of our economy is not addressed, if this budget doesn't address the critical need for urban infrastructure that allows cities to function well, if it doesn't deal with environmental issues that in turn have a huge impact on health costs, if it doesn't deal with moral issues like the well-being of the poorest in this society, if it doesn't deal with the needs of families to ensure that they have the day care that they require, then a budget fails.

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This budget fails. Others will get up today and address the substance and direction of this budget. But for me, this is a budget that was ill-conceived, ill-executed and one that I would urge people to vote against.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I want to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth in his very extensive assessment of the budget. I appreciate his social conscience and the philosophy that he brings to the task. However, he was more significant in what he did not address than in what he addressed. He addressed a lot of individual aspects of this budget. The most significant part of this budget is, in fact, the stimulus package and how it addresses the recession.

We know that every advanced economy in the world made a collective decision that they needed stimulus funding to save our economies, particularly to save manufacturing jobs. That hits home very, very significantly in Ontario, particularly in the automobile parts and automobile sectors. What is significant in this budget is that it renews and supports the \$32-billion stimulus spending to save jobs and create jobs. The best ammunition we have to help the social safety net is to create jobs, a healthy economy, so we have more wealth to share, so we can save the wealth from going in the wrong direction, which this budget does in very, very large measure.

Statistics Canada recently came out with the statistic that Ontario has the highest GDP of any economy in the North America. The Conference Board of Canada has indicated that we are heading for a 3.5% growth rate this year.

We are creating jobs, and creating those jobs and saving those jobs is what is going to help the social safety net. I empathize with the member—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from the Beaches and I don't necessarily agree philosophically on a lot of

things, but I can tell you that we certainly do agree on the comment he made regarding the Goldman Sachs issue.

I think we have to remember that the charges have been laid. There has been no admission or finding of guilt amongst them, but if the charges have any merit whatsoever, it would appear that this company has gone over the edge as far as what they have done in the marketplace and has gone a long way to causing many of the problems that the United States and indeed the world economy finds itself in.

The fact that Goldman Sachs is contracted with the Ontario government: It would be very prudent, to say the very least, if the government were to review that contract very, very carefully to ensure that the money of Ontario's taxpayers is being well looked after. When the red flag goes up, a prudent company, a prudent individual or a prudent government takes action in order to protect those whose responsibility it is to protect those tax dollars. I would like to hear from the government at their earliest opportunity that that contract is being reviewed and that the details of the work that Goldman Sachs has done are being scrutinized in order to protect the taxpayers of Ontario's dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: In the two minutes available, first, I want to take the opportunity to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth, from the third party, for his lead as their critic. More formally, this is the first budget cycle I think he has been the critic for. I certainly have appreciated his work on the committee, as a member from the government side, and his thoughtfulness at those times. Although we don't always agree on all of the issues, he brings some pretty sound judgment to the process.

I want to pick up on where the member from Ottawa West–Nepean left off, and that's on the issue of investment in infrastructure. Clearly, we have to have focus in budgets. You can't be all things to all people, though we do spread the resources around. But we do have a \$32-billion commitment—this is the second major year of that—as part of the stimulus initiatives to create jobs and renew the infrastructure in this province.

We certainly have been investing in transit, in community infrastructure and in housing throughout the province. I want to speak briefly to my own riding area. We're making a \$700-million commitment in new and upgraded sports and recreation infrastructure in Toronto for the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games. As part of that, my riding will be a benefactor at the University of Toronto Scarborough, with a major new facility there as well. It will encourage and expedite the infrastructure spending for public access through public transit in that area.

The discussion—and it will go on, I'm sure—around investments in Transit City and investment in transit—this, as we have said, has not been abandoned in any way. Certainly these things will take longer. They will have to be spread over additional years, subject to what

Metrolinx is able to do with their funding formula. But there is a strong commitment to continue infrastructure spending to support the economy as we grow out of the recession we find ourselves in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate hearing and commenting on the member from Toronto–Danforth, particularly his aspects about all-day kindergarten when he mentioned about what's taking place there.

There seems to be a large concern—and hopefully the government gets an opportunity to answer some of the concerns that are coming out regarding all-day kindergarten—on what the actual related costs are going to be to those individuals who are being removed from the daycares. When you meet with daycares, their area where they subsidize the younger individuals in attendance is made up by the costs that are paid and similar costs by the older individuals in those daycares who will now be removed from those daycares, which essentially means that those younger kids going to the daycares will have to pay more in order for it to be there for them to continue on in providing those services, which is going to have a large impact on a lot of individuals as well.

One of the other areas of concern is the ability to manage professional development days during all-day kindergarten. What's going to happen to those individuals and the obligations of the schools or those parents when those kids are not having to go to school on those days and they do not have a regular daycare that they go to? I would certainly hope that the individuals within the ministry would allow the various boards to enter into contractual agreements with the various service providers out there. This is a positive criticism, I hope, that all those service providers will be able to contract with the schools and provide a service locally so that in cases such as professional development days, those students still have an opportunity. Instead of being in kindergarten, they can still be taken care of, rather than the parents trying to scramble and find places for the kids to be on those days.

I very much appreciate the member, as I said, from Toronto–Danforth, and I look forward to his response.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Ottawa West–Nepean, Halton, Pickering–Scarborough East and Oshawa. As all of you in this chamber know, sometimes speaking here can be a lonely experience, so I appreciate the fact that you listened to what I had to say.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: We surprised you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I was very surprised. You had content.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Peter, don't be so negative.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No, no. I'm not being negative. Sometimes people get up and have not necessarily listened to what you've had to say.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Now, now, be good, Doctor. I'm actually complimenting those who spoke.

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I want to speak, in the brief time I have, about the comments from the members from Ottawa West–Nepean and Pickering–Scarborough East. If, in fact, we're going to make sure that we have an economy that has a robust manufacturing sector in the future, the tax cuts for corporations in this budget are not going to do it. What they will do is reward very profitable banks and not help the manufacturing sector, which doesn't have much to report in the way of profits these days. If we are going to deal with the difficulties in the manufacturing sector, it would make more sense for us to be investing in them through tax credits for growth investment rather than giving large tax breaks to banks that frankly are doing fairly well. That's a consequential flaw in this budget.

I want to say as well that in the brief time I've been here in this Legislature, since 2006, I've heard about that \$30-billion investment in infrastructure every year. In 2006, I was talking to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal in estimates, and he told me then about the \$30 billion. Every year that \$30 billion, which is now getting time-worn, is being moved around.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and speak in support of the spring 2010 budget bill. We've been chatting here about the challenges that the Ontario economy has faced. Certainly, economies the world over have just come out of a very, very difficult year. Ontario is no different: We've obviously had a situation where Ontario, just like other jurisdictions all over the world, has faced a sharp decline in government revenues at exactly the same time we've seen an increased demand for government services. And when we go to present our budget, that obviously creates a serious challenge.

We're quite focused on what we need to do with this budget. We know we need to create jobs, we need to help Ontario families and we need to establish the environment that will allow Ontario to grow in the future. We also know that reality is reality, that our revenues are not going to recover as quickly as we might like and that that means we need to look at how we can slow the growth in government spending, because we need to recognize the need to stimulate the economy and support families, but we also need to recognize fiscal reality.

That's why we put together our Open Ontario plan, first outlined in the throne speech and then elaborated in the budget, because it does precisely those things. It creates jobs, creates investment and sets the future for economic growth, all the time understanding that we are not working in an ideal fiscal environment.

I'd like to start off by talking a little bit about some of the investments around jobs and growth that are in this year's budget and in future budgets. Oddly, because I'm

a member who's from southern Ontario—you know that I'm from Guelph—I want to start by speaking about northern Ontario. I think that people who live in northern Ontario often think that we, here in the south, don't pay any attention to northern Ontario, and there's been a fair bit of reaction from the official opposition that they didn't really like the northern Ontario initiative.

It's hard for us here in the south to get an accurate read on it, so I was really interested about a week ago when I, as many people do, was sort of wandering into my constituency office over the weekend to try to catch up with paperwork. A chap who leases one of the other offices in the building said, "Liz, I want to talk to you about the budget." I had no idea what he wanted to talk about. It turned out that he wanted to talk about the northern Ontario initiatives.

This was a chap who had grown up in Wawa. He has a company that's based in Guelph. It does mobile communications in remote locations, and of course he still does a lot of work in northern Ontario—in very remote parts of northern Ontario. He was absolutely thrilled with our commitment to working in the Ring of Fire to bring on the chromite deposits.

I had never heard of chromite until a few months ago, so I think I'm like just about like everybody else in Ontario. If you're going to make stainless steel, you have to have chromite, and there's only one other deposit in the world. There isn't any other deposit. We've discovered that in northern Ontario, way north up near James Bay, in what's been labelled the Ring of Fire, there are substantial chromite developments.

We recognized in the budget that it's going to take a long time to develop those. But we also recognize that if we don't start, it won't happen.

He said, "You know, from the point of view of a northerner who still works in the north, that commitment in the throne speech, Open Ontario and the budget to working with northern Ontario is so important to those of us who work there in remote areas of northern Ontario, to know that the Ontario government sitting down here in Toronto is actually thinking about the future growth of northern Ontario and how we develop it." He was absolutely delighted that we are committed to appointing a Ring of Fire coordinator and that we've already started to allocate money—\$45 million over three years—to start to work with the First Nations and other people in the area to provide training so that when the development comes, people who actually live there will be able to get the jobs.

If we don't start working on the training now, when the development comes, it isn't going to be the local people who will benefit. We want to make sure that local people benefit.

There has been lots of reference to the \$32.5-billion investment that we have been making over two years in infrastructure to stimulate the economy. I don't know how carefully people have been following that, but in Guelph, that has been huge. We're receiving \$66 million for municipal infrastructure, and that goes for everything

from digging up what seems like every road in Guelph—at least, every road that leads to my constituency office seems to be dug up. Now that the good weather is here, the shovels are out, and all the roads are dug up again. That's part of that \$32.5 billion.

It also includes things like a new transit hub so that when the GO train comes to Guelph, all the municipal transit services, Greyhound, GO and Via transit services will all work out of one transit hub to make it easier for people. That's coming out of this \$66 billion.

We were successful in getting some rink money which is going to make a difference at various arenas and municipal places—also some of the recreational facilities at the Grand River Conservation Authority, which is a wonderful conservation authority, and upgrading some of their facilities as well.

One of the things has really caught the imagination of people in Guelph. We have a new city hall in Guelph, and we're investing in what's going to be, in the winter, an outdoor skating rink. In the summer, obviously it won't be ice; it'll be water. It'll also be a recreational area.

We're also spending, out of that \$32.5 billion, \$33 million at the University of Guelph. I'm sure there are some grads in the crowd here or at least on TV. The building that, over the years has variously been known at BGZ—botany, zoology and genetics—now it's Axelrod, and now it's going on to be the environmental centre; a building that was built in the early 1950s is going to be totally retrofitted. It's a totally inaccessible building. For anybody who isn't totally mobile, you can't get here from there just given the way the staircases are aligned, so it's going to be made accessible. It's also going to be retrofitted so it will be energy efficient. They found, when they started to rip the building apart, that, in fact, there was no insulation whatsoever. You can imagine this very large building, which is going to get bigger, with the fact that there was no insulation and single-glazed windows—just how much heat, and the expense of that was literally going up in the air.

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There are some really exciting things happening in Guelph. Because Guelph has always been very interested in education—in fact, two of these things are really quite important to my town. Guelph is a university town; it's also an auto manufacturing town, which means that we have been very, very hard hit in my constituency by the slump in the auto industry. So skills training is very important in my area. One of the figures that people give us—and the technology triangle is this KW-Guelph-Cambridge area; these data would be a little bit out of date now—is that there are 2,000 jobs that are unfilled in my area at the same time that there's a 10.1% unemployment rate. What that tells you is that there's a mismatch between the jobs in the new economy and the qualifications they need and the people who have been laid off.

While it's true that the auto sector is starting up again and people are getting hired back again, manufacturing in

my area has taken a horrendous hit. An old family-owned company, W.C. Wood, which has been producing freezers and refrigerators in Guelph for decades, went bankrupt. I was fortunate a few months ago to be at the opening of their job action centre, working with people who were laid off when the last of their plants was closed. It was interesting talking to the people who had been working on the floor at W.C. Wood for 20, 25, even 30 years in some cases, because they had come not even after high school graduation; they had gone on the floor at Wood before they even graduated from high school. Those folks, who were not young folks anymore, recognized that they were going to have to retrain to get a new job.

That's why the extension of the Second Career funding is so vitally important to my community. We are committed to provide funding for 30,000 additional clients for retraining. That's just absolutely crucial for the people in my riding.

The other thing I mentioned is that we're a university town, and we know, again looking at those jobs that are going unfilled, that the jobs of tomorrow are going to need people who have post-secondary education. We are providing \$310 million to increase the number of spaces for students in post-secondary education by 20,000 this September. We're going to be looking at international markets, internationally trained students and whether we can attract more internationally trained students. We need to make it clear that those 20,000 additional spots are for Ontario students. The internationally trained students whom we're hoping to attract are a different group of students. It isn't that we're setting up some sort of competition, because again, and I'm not sure that everyone is aware of this, the internationally trained students pay the full cost of tuition. They don't benefit from the grants that the provincial government gives to post-secondary institutions; they pay much higher tuition than Ontario students do.

But the reason that it's so important to attract internationally trained students is because they come to us, they bring their wealth of experience from all over the world and in many cases they choose to stay here. A lot of them fall in love with Guelph, I've got to tell you, and decide that they would like to stay. They enrich the province with the skills, the knowledge and the wealth of experience they bring from all over the world.

We're also looking at expanding online post-secondary opportunities, and again, that's important from a retraining point of view. Not everybody can give up everything and move to Guelph, so having online post-secondary education is really, really important to people in other communities. We're also looking at having our universities and colleges work more closely together, so that if you're in one place, you have more credits that can transfer to another if you decide that you want to switch programs. It's a whole bunch of things that are very, very important when we look at that planning for the jobs of the future and who's going to have the necessary education and skills to fill those jobs.

But one of the really exciting things is that of course we're taking the long view and also investing in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. That will be beginning in 600 schools this September. We know that this is a challenging program to implement because we need to sort out new arrangements between the school systems and child care, so we will be implementing this over a number of years and working through some of the problems that various speakers have identified.

But one of the really exciting things we were able to do in the budget was to provide \$63.5 million in funding for the existing child care providers to backfill that money that is missing from the federal government and to make sure that we can retain those child care spaces that are there.

One of the things that is particularly exciting to me is that we were also able to provide funding for children's treatment centres. The children's treatment centres, as you know, work with children who have both physical and intellectual disabilities. We have a wonderful children's treatment centre that serves Wellington and Waterloo, and it just does wonderful work at KidsAbility. As their share, they will be receiving a \$630,000 increase, plus an additional \$70,000 in capital, and are quite delighted to be one of 12 children's treatment centres sharing in \$2.5 million for upgrading their IT, their information technology. They were just delighted to learn about that.

Because we know we have to support the vulnerable, we're also adding to the minimum wage, increasing that. It has just gone up to \$10.25 per hour. Social assistance has been mentioned. Adults who are on social assistance will be getting a 1% increase in social assistance.

I did mention that we need to manage responsibly. I think we should take just the few minutes remaining to look at that because we know this is a long-term project, climbing out of this deficit and getting back to balanced budgets. I want people to understand that one of the things the budget does is, it freezes our wages here in this Legislature for another two years. That's a total of three years. But it isn't just us because, quite frankly, freezing our wages is largely symbolic. The public likes to hear this, but it isn't a big piece of a multi-billion-dollar budget.

What does start to make a difference is that we will be freezing the non-bargained wages and benefits in the public sector. That includes the people who work for the Ontario Legislature directly for the Ontario government, our political staff but also in the broader public sector. So anybody who is not in a collective agreement will have their wages frozen for the next two years because we know that we operate at the behest of the Ontario taxpayer and so many of them are struggling.

We are respecting collective agreements. We looked at what happened with the last governments and saw that when you try and rip up collective agreements, it doesn't work. They didn't ultimately save any money. They just caused a lot of disruption to public services. We're not operating that way. We are respecting collective agree-

ments, but we have given notice that when those collective agreements come up for renegotiation, we are not budgeting for compensation increases for the first two years when they come up.

We've also had to do some things like phasing the Metrolinx projects, the transit projects here. I want to assure you that those projects will go ahead. They will just be phased a bit differently, but a matter of \$4 billion when you're dealing with a deficit of \$21.5 billion is not to be sneezed at. We need to look at some of these major projects and manage them better.

1520

However, I would like my constituents to know that the Georgetown South line is going ahead. While normally that's put in the context of getting the air-rail link to the airport, I would like my constituents to know that, to me, the Georgetown South line going ahead means that we will get good GO train service to Guelph sooner. All that construction going on in the Georgetown South corridor is what allows us to get trains past Mr. Chudleigh's riding or his neck of the woods and on out west to Guelph and Kitchener. Getting that service out west of here means we need to do that.

In fact, the Minister of Transportation was jointly announcing with the federal government, just this week, \$16.6 million for six bridges. Those are six bridges in Toronto that we need to make wider so we can get more tracks under to go to Guelph.

It's a good budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate hearing from the member for Guelph, who touched on a number of topics that are very key.

She talked about the children's centres. In our riding, there was a meeting last Friday with Ted Aldridge from the children's aid society. There are obviously huge concerns there with funding and programs, particularly the TAY program and a number of other programs, and what's going to happen with the \$4-million shortfall they're looking at, where they've been directed to get a line of credit in order to deal with their problems.

She also mentioned the GO expansion. We've got a considerable amount of expansion planned through Durham, Oshawa, Whitby and a number of those areas. I fully understand from what I am being told here, without being hands-on and knowing what's taking place in the ministry as to why it would or would not take place, that the expansion goes through a number of areas.

I wonder why the 407 doesn't appear to be moving forward. We have completion dates, supposedly, that are going to be in place. However, one aspect—and I'm not sure if the member is familiar with it—would be that in previous governments, the debt from the 407 was never added to the provincial debt. In other words, the expansion of the 407 should be allowed to continue on. According to, as I recall, the Auditor General's statements—because it's a toll road and would eventually pay for itself one way or another—it would not be added to

the provincial debt, and it would be one way to allow for infrastructure and development of various transportation modes.

As I said, the GO Transit is very difficult to move forward with.

The last aspect that I want to talk about is the northern development and mines ministry and northern Ontario. When we were in Sioux Lookout and spoke about the Far North Act there, when members presenting before the committee stand up and say they're willing to go to war over the legislation that was being brought forward in the Far North Act—as well as Grand Chief Stan Beardy. I've worked with him on a number of occasions, trying to help curb youth suicide in a number of the First Nations communities in the Far North. When they stand and say that they will completely disregard it and it will not be applicable to them in legislation, to me it doesn't sound like there's a good working relationship that's moving forward in many aspects up there. I think a lot more work needs to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to be able to speak to the comments made by the member from Guelph.

I want to speak first about the whole question of the Ring of Fire. My colleague here from the riding of Oshawa talked about the bad relations between the government of Ontario and First Nations in the north. Time and again, that reality has been echoed back to me by my colleagues who are from the north who deal directly with First Nations, who understand the history of ill will and lack of respect for, frankly, the rights and the needs of the First Nations.

There's no question that this government is pegging a lot of the future prosperity and well-being of this province on development of minerals in the Ring of Fire. If it hasn't come to a respectful government-to-government agreement with First Nations, I can say right now that the prospects for doing any development up there are going to be drastically reduced.

I also want to note that although the Ring of Fire development is being presented in this budget and debated in the budget as something that is going to have very near-term positive impacts on Ontario's economy, when I talk to my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, who seems to know a fair amount about mining and mining development, his read is that you won't actually see anything from this for a decade. So it is very splashy and it sounds pretty dramatic and one can talk about the manufacturing or extraction future, but the reality is, it really is in the future.

I want to say, as well, that it is critical in the development of anything to do with the Ring of Fire that the environmental values and needs of the north are respected in that development; any development up there has got to ensure that the north is left environmentally healthy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to add some comments in response to the honourable member from Guelph and her very astute and, I think, mature observations about the economy generally.

The simple truth is, we can't have it both ways. You, Madam Speaker, will perhaps appreciate better than most that nobody would have remembered the good Samaritan if he hadn't had money.

The reality is that we need to create a strong and a prosperous economy in order to significantly and meaningfully respond on all kinds of fronts—everything from the poverty agenda through to how to expedite those things which we know in our heart of hearts need to be completed on the transit front. But it isn't easy. I used to believe many, many years ago that money grew on trees. But I grew up; unlike Peter Pan, I grew up. I know that isn't the case anymore. I know we have to continue to work at it.

Coming out of the worst global economic crisis of the last 80 years—and rest assured, we are coming out of the worst global economic crisis of the last 80 years—for many of the reasons that the honourable member from Guelph has already articulated, we are taking prudent and responsible steps with respect to public sector spending. In fact, I don't know if members know this, but I've been doing a little bit of background research on this sunshine list that some people wail about here. Those on the sunshine list represent about 4.3% of the Ontario public service; the private sector—if you were to compare—it would be about 6.3%. So I think the member from Guelph has caught the spirit of where we need to go very well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always interesting to listen to the debate on the budget. Many times, we consider that the things that are announced in the budget are a fait accompli, but with this government, that is not always the case.

You will remember, in the budgets back in 2003 and 2004, when the government talked about the fact that they were going to have a lot of restraint in their spending habits—and of course, since that time, they have increased the provincial budget by over 65%. The economy of Ontario has increased less than one tenth of that amount. So those announcements don't always take place.

They also announced back then that they were going to reduce the reliance on consultants in this province. I think most people in Ontario know that over the last number of years the government has had a very close relationship with Courtyard; we have seen a \$1-billion eHealth scandal; we have seen a continuing scandal in the LHINs that is ongoing. Almost every day we uncover some other consultants who have gone on to LHINs. So the promises that are made in budgets don't always take place.

They talked about, in one budget, a red tape reduction promise. The CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Inde-

pendent Business, talk about the fact that red tape costs have risen to almost \$11 billion a year in Ontario. So that's another promise that didn't take place.

They promised to close coal plants, as you remember; that was in a speech from a throne, and they promised to do it in 2007. That promise went by the board; they didn't fulfill that promise. So they promised to do it in 2009, and, of course, that promise went by the board too. They didn't do it then. Now they have promised to do it in 2014—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Guelph has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members for Halton, Oshawa, Toronto–Danforth and Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough and one more I didn't write down.

1530

Just to comment on the comments of the member from Oshawa around the 407, it always amazes me that each year the Auditor General, in fact, does seem to slightly change the treatment of how things are accounted for in the budget. The Auditors General get together annually and seem to have an evolving conversation around how tax treatments work. Things do move. However, the main thing around the 407 may be that the accounting treatment would be different because, of course, we don't plan to sell the highway after we build it. That would lead to a difference in the accounting treatment.

In terms of the comments from the member from Toronto–Danforth around the Ring of Fire, I agree with him. It is quite a long-term picture before we are going to see investment up and running, and that is precisely for the reason that he cited at the beginning of his comments: Because we do know that we need to have extensive consultations with the First Nations and work out with the First Nations exactly how this is going to work. We realize that this is a long process, but if I can go back to my constituent, what he appreciated was our commitment to starting that long-term process and investing in it.

To my friend from Ancaster and all those other places, I'm always amazed when anybody can tie together the good Samaritan, Peter Pan and my remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak this afternoon on second reading of Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts.

As you know, this is an important part of the legislative process—to have the opportunity to debate the government's first budget bill. As you'll recall, the provincial budget was read into the Legislature on March 25, about three and a half weeks ago, I guess. You'll recall that day, as I do, Madam Speaker. Many members of our caucus had the opportunity to go to the lock-up over at one of the government buildings across the way and have an opportunity to review the details of the budget, but of course we're sworn to secrecy until the budget is read. The fact is, when we were trying to leave

the budget lock-up at about 10 to 4 that afternoon, we were prohibited from leaving because there were OPP staff who told us that they had been told that they were not permitted to let us out of the lock-up until they heard from the minister's office. They were seeking permission from the minister's office to let us go.

We asked repeatedly to be allowed to leave the lock-up. In fact, we were not permitted to leave until about five minutes to 4. Again, we were over at the Macdonald Block, so you can imagine how some of us literally sprinted over here in order to get to the chamber. As we came in, the government members were snickering at us, laughing at us because we were coming in late.

Mr. Dave Levac: Untrue, untrue.

Mr. Ted Arnott: That is absolutely the truth. That's exactly what happened. It was very disappointing, and I would hope that there is further explanation brought forward to the opposition as to why that happened. My suspicion is someone in the minister's office probably thought it would be funny if we were kept over there till about 4 o'clock and then be late to come into the chamber. That's my belief as to what happened. But I certainly wanted to put that on the record again because there still has not been any satisfactory explanation from the government party as to why that happened.

Certainly, other members of the government side without question would have had the opportunity to sit in the lock-up. They were released before we were, obviously. Again, it happened three and a half weeks ago, but I wanted to put that on the record because I still think the government owes us an explanation, if not an apology.

The budget itself: Well, in response to the budget, our caucus obviously does not support the budgetary policy of the government. In response to the budget, the day of the budget I said that the budget shows that Premier McGuinty still has a major spending problem, and that has led to a staggering provincial debt that is going to lead to an unconscionable burden on future generations. I've said many times that every year that Mr. McGuinty adds to the debt, he's digging the hole deeper and deeper, which makes it harder and harder for us to get out. When the government says that the tough decisions don't have to be made now, that they can put it off, of course, people in Ontario understand that that just means it's going to make it more difficult when the decisions have to be made. Every year we put it off, the hole gets deeper and deeper.

Before the budget, the government leaked details of the deficit and patted themselves on the back with the news that the deficit this coming year was going to be only \$21.3 billion, they said. Again, "only" was their word, suggesting that that was good news because it was slightly lower than what had been previously anticipated, something like a \$25-billion deficit. I said at the time it appeared that the government was playing games with the numbers.

As we know, the \$21.3-billion deficit that they have acknowledged for this year is still the largest deficit in Ontario history. It also means that we're going to be

borrowing more than \$2 million an hour, every hour of every day, 365 days a year. Overall spending continues to go up even as taxpayers' ability to pay continues to go down.

By the government's own projections, the provincial debt will double by 2013. So over the course of the McGuinty government experience, the debt will double by 2013. I made the observation that it appears the government is putting off all the tough decisions until after the next election, which, of course, is scheduled for October 2011. They're leaving it to the next government.

There was no real jobs plan in the budget, nothing that would give anyone who is out of work or considers themselves underemployed any reason to hope for a better future. I have had a significant number of constituents coming to me in recent weeks and months who have been looking for jobs for many months at a time. We desperately need new, good and well-paying jobs. We need sustainable private sector job growth. As I said, I would submit that this budget does not include a plan which will address this particular part of the economic equation.

As you know, Madam Speaker, our caucus has also objected to the government's plan to extend lucrative severance payments to the tax collectors in the Ministry of Revenue who won't miss a day of work. As we know, under the McGuinty government's HST plan, provincial Ministry of Revenue staff will receive payments of up to \$45,000, up to six months' severance, simply for the inconvenience of transferring from the Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency. They won't miss a single day's work. I don't know how the government can explain this. So far, we have not had an explanation that makes any sense whatsoever. People in my riding are providing me with a lot of feedback on this issue. I raised this issue, as you know, Madam Speaker, in the House on March 11, when it came to our attention.

I want to touch briefly upon one of the issues that I'm hearing about in my riding. I know that the government members, I'm sure, are hearing the same thing. I'm pleased that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is in this House at the present time. I'm receiving a great deal of communication from my constituents who are concerned about this government's policy with respect to pharmacy. It is clear that the McGuinty Liberals have declared war on Ontario's pharmacists, and I believe that small-town residents may very well be caught in the crossfire. I would suggest that the Minister of Health needs to withdraw her proposals to cut pharmacy service. I would suggest that she should tone down her rhetoric and sit down with the pharmacists' association to seek common ground. I would suggest that if she doesn't do this, many of our independent pharmacies will not survive, and our small towns will be the losers.

Bill 16 includes amendments to the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, which are, I guess, required by the government to undertake this war on pharmacy. We would suggest that they withdraw those proposals. I realize that the Minister of Health maintains

that the changes are needed to control the cost of drugs, but I would submit and suggest she has ignored constructive proposals that the pharmacists' association has presented to the government in recent months. We also know that Ontarians have now paid \$15 billion in the health tax that Premier McGuinty promised he wouldn't levy, and people seem to understand that we're paying more and more and receiving less and less.

1540

I think it's also important to point out that the Auditor General criticized the McGuinty Liberal government's eHealth program, which was intended to create computerized patient records. It cost something like \$1 billion yet delivered very little in the way of results, and we see that they're wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on one hand and clawing it out of pharmacy with the other.

Another issue that has been brought to my attention in my constituency that I want to bring to the attention of the House this afternoon is the issue of wind farms. As you know, the government passed the Green Energy Act just over a year ago, which sets a framework upon which companies can put proposals before the Ontario Power Authority and the Ministry of the Environment for consideration for wind farms to create wind energy generation. I would suggest that we need to put these wind farm projects on hold pending the completion of a study which would document their health effects. I would suggest that before we build massive new wind farms, we need to know they're safe. I believe that my constituents are behind me with that contention, based on the response and the feedback I'm receiving from my riding.

I introduced a resolution in the Legislature on March 25, and I called for this comprehensive and credible study which would fully document the full health impacts of wind turbines before any new wind farm proposals could proceed. I know that my colleague the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch, introduced a similar motion last fall, but it seems that every single Liberal member present at the time of that vote voted against it. It would appear that they were whipped to vote against it. Still, I believe that increasing interest and concern over the issue merits further consideration of the points that Mr. Murdoch raised, and that's why my resolution has been brought to the floor of the House.

Many municipalities across the province have passed resolutions consistent with my resolution. I would make specific reference to the county of Wellington, the township of Centre Wellington as well as Mapleton township, which, of course, I used to be privileged to represent but is now in the riding of Perth-Wellington. I would suggest that our local councils deserve credit for taking a strong stand. I would just like to warn the government that there is going to be more to come on that issue as we move forward because we believe that the government is currently not listening.

I'm privileged to serve as our party's tourism critic. I had a chance to raise some tourism issues in the Legislature last week. I'm pleased that the Minister of Tourism is in the House today because he would, I'm

sure, want to know that his ministry website shows that the number of tourists visiting the province of Ontario continues to decline. If you look at the international border crossings for the most recent statistics available, for January 2010, it shows total inbound crossings from the United States down 12% and from overseas down 13.6%. If you look at the employment in tourism-related industries, it's down by 1%. If you look at hotel occupancy in Ontario, it's down 4.4%. The hotel average daily rate is down 5.9%. Again, this is percentage change, year over year. These numbers are down considerably even from last year's numbers, which were down considerably from the previous year's. It shows that our tourism industry continues to be in a dire situation with diminished numbers, and we don't see a clear plan on the part of this government to turn those numbers around.

We know that our attractions and our various tourism-related industries have a lot to offer. There's considerable untapped potential in our tourism businesses in terms of the numbers of people who should be coming, and we just need the right kind of leadership from this government in order to turn those numbers around. I believe that we could, but I was disappointed to hear the Minister of Tourism, in his response to my question, suggest that the HST is going to be a good thing for tourism. I know that people on our side of the House were startled to hear that statement, and the feedback I'm receiving from the industry is consistent with that as well.

A few weeks ago, I sent out a newsletter to my constituents, and included in my newsletter was a survey. I asked people to fill out the survey. These are the some of the responses I've received; actually, a small sample of what I've received. My commitment to my constituents was that I would read each and every reply. As I've been going through them, I think many of them have included advice and suggestions that are worthy of consideration in this House. I'd like to go through and just read a few of them, if I could, in the time I have remaining.

This one is from Rockwood, Ontario: "As senior citizens who have seen our retirement savings rapidly diminish in this economy, we will be facing great financial difficulty with the implementation of the 'HST.' Heating, hydro, transportation and other necessary costs will rise with this tax, while our incomes do not. 'Tax grants' will do nothing to help those who pay little or no income tax, but our living expenses still rise."

This response is from Georgetown: "The HST coming up is very concerning. Financially, times are tough for me and my family, and we cannot afford to pay out more money for tax. In anticipation of the hit coming, my wife has recently abandoned the role of 'stay-at-home mother,' and had to go back to work."

Here's one from RR4, Fergus: "Hello, Ted. You are right about this new sales tax. This not only will hurt the customers; this also affects the retailers, suppliers and

manufacturers. Lower purchasing and sales loss is not going to help our economy."

Here's another one about the HST. In fact, I would have to say that the vast majority of the responses make reference to the HST, and the vast majority, of course, are opposed. This response came from Georgetown: "How can the government push a tax like the HST without consulting the public? Same question for smart meters. These two tax grabs at the same time will bankrupt a lot of families."

Here's a response from Rockwood, Ontario, that I thought was short and very compelling—the voice of rural Ontario, really: "It is very hard to understand that governments can have so little respect for their food supply." That says a lot.

Here's a response from Erin: "Education—'graduates' from secondary cannot read or write. Low-income seniors, single parents are stretched now making ends meet—HST will only make it worse."

I have a response here from Elora, and it is very interesting. It says, "Bob Rae was a pussycat next to Dalton! The mismanagement and"—I can't say the next word because it's unparliamentary—"are shameful and disgusting!" This is the voice of people from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Here's another one, from Hillsburgh, Ontario:

"Greenbelt: If farmers will not be compensated for the loss in their equity when they retire, then who is going to continue to farm in the greenbelt? Since wind turbines and aggregate extraction are not prohibited, those farmers I referred to above will automatically be 'forced' to sell their farms to these businesses. This approach pleases the city slickers and their McGuinty cronies!

"Transportation: The construction of a railroad from Pearson to Toronto has been delayed again. This gives the opposition parties a second chance to demand an electric train instead of American diesels. On a recent trip to France, Germany and Switzerland, I saw nothing else [other] than electrics—most of them made by our own Bombardier company! No—of course—we must not accept continental thinking—only outdated American." Interesting comments.

Here's another one about the HST from Rockwood: "We are going to find it hard with our bills with the extra tax. Will the farmers get any of this HST back? It really is a money grab on us hard-working folks."

Here's another comment from Georgetown that I thought was especially compelling: "It's difficult to plan for the future for myself and my children without a job and an unstable economy."

"I'm already finding it difficult to survive day-to-day expenses. I'm worried the HST will make things even worse."

Here's another comment from Erin: "As a senior on pensions, I'm finding it difficult to live in Erin township. I own my own home (mortgage-free). Extremely high property taxes, lack of enough doctors, poor ambulance service, garbage fees, drive to Bellwood with large items—all this has me thinking [that I'll have to] move."

Another comment from the township of Huron, this one in Hillsburgh: “Canadian/Ontario governments just became an albatross of mismanagement, abuse of public money, education/training 40 years out of date. Social programs should be a stopgap, not a two- or three-generation way of life. Our public transportation is 30 years out of date and behind the times. Our road and water and sewers are a disgrace.” This is a plea for improved infrastructure spending, which I found very interesting.

1550

Here’s another comment from Elora. I asked the three questions as well in this survey. I asked, “What is Ontario’s biggest challenge?” I listed some of them, and the response went this way. “These boxed items should be considered one challenge since each one affects the other. With government buildings underutilized or not being used at all, spending on maintenance etc., is foolish and wasteful. Expense accounts and ad budgets are grossly overfunded. Photo opportunities are too often ego trips at taxpayers’ expense. Government is to be for the people, not just for some people. Research funding should have a realistic outcome that would benefit all.”

Here’s another response from Georgetown. I had a very heavy response from Georgetown, actually. “People are still losing jobs, companies keep closing. The retraining help the government is offering is laughable. All the jobs are going to Third World countries for a bigger profit margin. Yet prices and taxes keep going up. The working few out here need help.”

I’m running out of time, but I’m glad to have had this chance to speak on behalf of my constituents from Wellington–Halton Hills this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have listened to some of the comments from my colleague in the Conservative Party, and let me say that I share his concerns as expressed by some of his constituents regarding the HST.

The reality is, certainly in my part of Ontario, many people have incomes now that are significantly less than they were four or five years ago. Some of this has come from the loss of jobs in the forest sector. Some of it has come from the loss of jobs in supporting sectors of the economy. Some of this has come, frankly, from other cutbacks that have affected people. But the reality is, a substantial number of people have significantly less money, significantly less disposable income now than they had three or four years ago, and yet the McGuinty Liberals want to introduce a tax which will be a tax on just about everything.

If a loved one dies in your family, and you want to provide them with a funeral and you’re told the funeral will cost \$10,000, well, with the implementation of the HST, \$10,000 will become \$11,300. Taxes on a taxi ride—if you have to purchase a bus ticket to go somewhere, that will be taxed. If you want to put your kids into soccer or hockey, that will be taxed.

I just do not understand how the government thinks this formula can be made to work. People have less money now than they had three or four years ago, yet this government is going to demand that people pay substantially higher taxes on just about everything. It seems to me that this is a recipe for hardship for all kinds of people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to respond to the 20 minutes of speaking from the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. He touched on a couple of points that I’d like to make reference to, the first being the HST. He didn’t speak long on it or say a whole lot about it, but he did make reference to it. I’m not sure anyone could speak on this without making mention of the fact that there are a lot of people in the province of Ontario and a lot of people nationally in Canada who are very surprised by the message that the provincial Conservatives pretend to try and convey in terms of their opposition to the introduction of the HST.

Of course, everyone knows that their federal cousins, the federal Conservative government, very much support the introduction of the HST. Most people who have been paying attention to this issue completely understand that up to very recently, most, if not all, of the provincial members of the Conservative opposition supported the HST.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: That’s not right, and you know it.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, I think it was. I think it is right.

The other point that he raised in his speech that I’d like to mention is reference he made to the pharmacy issue and the debate that’s going on in Ontario right now between our government and pharmacies in the province of Ontario.

I’m not sure, exactly—he just referenced it. He didn’t say what his position was, particularly on what it is we’re trying to do. Of course, what we are trying to accomplish, currently, with this issue is to lower the cost of generic drug prices in the province of Ontario for seniors who can ill afford it and, at the same time, try and find some tax savings for the government of Ontario so that those cost savings can be reinvested into getting more drugs on the formulary and to lower the cost of the generics that are out there that people who do not have them paid for who have to pay out of pocket themselves currently have to pay for. That’s the point of what we’re trying to do right now.

The debate continues, and we’re hoping that in not too long a distance, we’ll be able to have some good news on that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Mr. Arnott is a tremendous constituency politician. I’ve been up in his area on a number of occasions. The people know him, they

trust him, and he talks with many of them in an informal way as well as in a formal way at his constituency office.

One of the things that he has been running into, and I've been running into in the area I represent, in eastern Ontario, is this HST that's coming on. The area which is most irritating to people is that they're going to have to pay 8% more on their gasoline purchases. In Ted's area and in my area, people don't have the option, in part of those areas, of public transportation, so they have to use their cars to get to and from work, to and from their recreation, to and from their grocery shops.

What really drives them crazy is that they're not only going to pay 8% on the purchase price of the gasoline from the oil company, but also they're going to pay 8% on a tax which they've already paid to the provincial government. That is, 14 cents on every litre is already charged by the provincial government. What is this government going to do? They're going to charge 8% on the 14% as well as the cost of the actual gasoline.

I urged the government to drop the price of their 14-cent-per-litre charge on each litre of gasoline by 8 cents so that we'll have approximate parity with regard to the HST and the increase of 8% that we will see on July 1. Drop your other tax by 8 cents so it'll be all even, and the consumer at the gas pump won't be paying a \$1.10 per litre but will be paying \$1, which is the approximate price now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the honourable member opposite; he's the critic for tourism and culture.

During his speech, he mentioned tourism, and I'd like to respond to a few points that he has mentioned. I appreciate the fact that he mentioned tourism. Last year, it had been down; quite a number of factors were down. As you can imagine, last year was a very, very difficult year. Also, compounded with the passport issue, the cross-border issue and the high dollar, as you can imagine, international or US visits to this province were quite challenging.

But I want to point out to the honourable member that in terms of mixing up all these numbers, 80% of tourists are domestic, about 13% of visitors come from the US, 2% are international visitors, and about 4% to 5% are from other provinces. You can see that 80% domestic is very important. That's why we've got to create jobs in Ontario: so that people who are unemployed can get back to work, get their job back so that they can generate disposable income; so that they can have the money to enjoy life and be a tourist across this province. This is very important.

The HST, by reducing business taxes, is greatly helping the economy, because when business taxes are low we're able to sustain and create jobs. That's how we're able to create jobs for people who are not working and get them back into jobs.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the members for Kenora–Rainy River and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their comments and acknowledge the comments, as well, from the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the Minister of Tourism.

Let's look at the budget again, because this is the budget bill that we're talking about. If you look at the budget papers document on page 48, you see the government's so-called plan to eliminate the deficit—and I'm glad the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance is in the House again today to hear my concern about this. The government would have led us to believe on budget day that, over an eight-year period, they were going to be able to balance the budget, but of course there are some key assumptions outlined on page 48 that, quite frankly, would lead you to believe that the government's plan to eliminate the deficit and balance the budget is bogus.

They say that they will have to hold the growth of program spending at 1.9% beyond 2012-13. Of course, this is after the election in 2011. I would again raise the rhetorical question as to when the government, if ever, kept program spending below 2%. Of course, the answer is that they have not. They have never come close to holding program expense increases to below 2%. I would submit that they have no real plan to do so. It would require spending cuts on a scale that we have not seen for many, many years. I would question very much whether or not this government has the stomach to do what would be required to hold program spending to below 2% per year.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's your plan, I say to the Minister of Agriculture. That's what you say you're going to, hold program spending to less than 1.9% a year.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Fire teachers?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister of Education.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Now you're suggesting that that would require firing and laying off teachers, you're saying, and firing nurses. That's your plan. I guess you're saying that's your plan.

But let's hear an explanation from the government side. There's lots of time over the course of this afternoon to hear how they're going to do this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to take a step back from the immediate and focus a bit on what has happened over the last few years and what the cumulative effect of these tax changes will be.

I still remember the video of one Dalton McGuinty looking into the television camera and saying, "I will not raise your taxes." I remember it was only seven months after that that something called the "health tax" was

implemented by the McGuinty Liberal government. Now, it is called a “health tax,” but even that is a bit of subterfuge, because it has nothing to do with health; it is simply a tax. But the way you try to make people swallow it is you try to convince them that it has something to do with health or health care. In fact, it’s simply money that is taxed from people that is put into the consolidated revenue fund. It has no direct or indirect tie to health care whatsoever. It’s just a subtle way of trying to say that this tax is not a tax.

The government implemented that. I was one who said, over and over again, “The government will have to raise taxes.” I was not the person who looked into the camera and said, “I will not raise your taxes.” It’s inevitable. But the issue I had with that and the issue I have with the HST is that if you look at the so-called health tax, it was overwhelmingly a tax on modest- and middle-income people. Someone with an income of, say, \$300,000 a year or more would have about a 1% increase in their income taxes, but somebody struggling to live on \$30,000 a year would in fact have a 25% increase in their provincial income taxes payable. People, families—and I know lots of them who struggle on \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year—would see similar, very large percentage increases in their taxes payable.

If you sit back and look at the so-called health tax implemented by the McGuinty Liberals, it was a tax that goes light on those who are very well off and goes very heavy on families with modest and middle incomes. I said at the time and I say it again: This is not fair, particularly when you see what’s happening in our society—and this is well documented now. Middle- and modest-income families are not seeing an increase in their incomes. They’re struggling to maintain their incomes and in many cases they’re actually losing income, and yet that was a tax that went after them hardest of all. We also know that at the top end you have people who are accumulating great wealth, and yet there was a relatively small percentage increase in their taxes payable. That’s what was done with the so-called health tax—overwhelmingly a tax on modest and middle-income families.

Now, a few years later, after saying that the HST was a regressive tax, something that Liberals in Ontario would never consider and was absolutely outside the bounds—I think I could give chapter and verse from the Premier and many of his cabinet ministers saying how bad the HST was—now, all of a sudden, this is a government that says that the HST is a wonderful thing. I look again at who is going to pay most of the burden of the HST. The government says, “It’s only a combination of the GST and the PST.” In fact, it’s a huge broadening of the PST. The old provincial sales tax is going to apply to a whole range of things that were never taxed in the past. So it is going to be a substantial increase in taxes.

For somebody who has an income of \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year, a broadening of that tax base is not going to hurt them at all. It’s not going to matter to them that the cost of a funeral for burying a loved one goes

from a \$10,000 base cost to \$11,300 with the HST; that’s not a big concern for them. It’s not a big concern for them that what is a \$200 retail hydro bill now becomes a \$226-a-month hydro bill with the HST. It’s not going to matter to them that a \$50 or \$100 taxi ride is going to become a \$113 taxi ride. Those are annoyances at worst for somebody who has a high income. But let me tell you that seniors in my constituency who don’t have a vehicle—if they want to go to the Loblaw or the Safeway or the grocery store, they have to take a taxi. If the taxi bill is \$50 and now with the HST it’s \$56.50, that hurts. If the hydro bill goes from \$200 a month to \$226 a month—figure it out; that’s \$300 a year added on—that hurts. They don’t have the money. If their physician says, “You need to buy vitamins,” and they go to the drugstore and they purchase \$50 worth of vitamins and it’s now \$56.50 with the HST, that hurts. They don’t have the money.

What worries me and what is very identifiable about this government is that when it says taxes must increase, what it overwhelmingly means is that taxes on middle- and modest-income families are going to be increased, not taxes on the well-off, not taxes on corporations—in fact, the government boasts that it’s going cut the taxes of Bay Street corporations. The banks and insurance companies and major corporations in Ontario will get a tax reduction at the same time that modest- and middle-income families, many of whom have less free income now than they’ve ever had before over the last 20 years, are going to be paying substantially more.

1610

I see the government’s ads in the newspapers and I hear them on the radio, that this is somehow going to be wonderful, but no one has yet been able to explain to me, and I don’t think you can explain to any reasonable person, how they can have less income than they had before, now be asked to pay more taxes than ever before, and they’re going to come out ahead. I don’t care how many times the government runs the ads or how nice the voices sound on the radio, I don’t think you can convince people who know that their income is less now than it was four or five years ago, who are going to be paying more taxes now than they were four or five years ago—I don’t think you can convince anyone that they’re going to come out of this better off. They’re not, and people understand it.

They understand that if they want their kids to play soccer, if they want their kids to play hockey, and the fees for field use or for the hockey rink are \$1,000, that now becomes \$1,130; they understand that every time they need to take a taxi, they’ve got to pay 13% more; they understand that if they simply want to go have a will made, the lawyer will say, “Well, the cost of the will is \$500, but you have to add in the cost of the HST.” And if my math is correct, I think that quickly becomes \$565 for the cost of a will when you add in the HST.

People understand, because people can do their own math, that this does not lead to them being better off. What it leads to is people, in fact, having less disposable

income at the end of the month, less to pay for the necessities of life. Which brings me to the other part of this issue. The government in northern Ontario tries to boast about this. They're saying, "Oh, we're going to provide an effective energy tax credit." All the average person has to do is simply add up their hydro bill. If your hydro bill is \$200 a month—and that's not an unusual hydro bill now; I know lots of people whose hydro bill is much higher than that because, after all, they have to pay the cost of all those inflated salaries at the Ontario Power Authority, and increasingly the inflated salaries at Hydro One, at Ontario Power Generation, at the electricity financing body and at the Independent Electricity System Operator—huge, burgeoning bureaucracies under this government—but people who have a \$200 hydro bill now understand that it will be \$226 a month. Just do the math: \$26 a month times 10 is \$260; add in another \$26 and another \$26, and you're over \$300 a year just in taxes.

The government's so-called energy credit won't even cover the increase in the hydro bill that comes from the HST, but then add in heating costs. If you've got an averaged-out heating bill that, let's say, comes to \$200 a month, with HST it's now \$226 a month; 10 months, \$260; 12 months, over \$300. Even with this government's so-called energy credit for residents of northern Ontario, people end up paying more.

These are not things you can do without. It's not like saying to people, "Well, don't buy the new car." It's not like saying to people, "Well, don't buy jewellery." It's not like saying to people, "Well, don't buy the new suit." These are things that people need. If you want to be able to rely upon the health and wholesomeness of the food in your refrigerator or your freezer, you need to be able to pay the hydro bill. It's not a good idea eating food that comes out of the freezer if the hydro has been shut off for three or four days.

If you expect people to survive in winters where it's not unusual that it gets to 20 below, 30 below or even colder some nights, heat—being able to pay the natural gas bill or the heating oil bill—is not a luxury. These are necessities. People have to be able to do this. But I know and I know other members of this Legislature know that there are all kinds of people now who are challenged trying to pay the heating bill and the hydro bill every month. They're challenged now. What happens when you tack on another 13%? What happens when you hit them with the HST on top of these costs?

I think this government owes people an explanation of that. People who already, at the end of the month, run out of food because it costs so much to pay the hydro bill, the heating bill and the rent—what are they supposed to do now with the HST? What are they supposed to do? How are they supposed to survive with this kind of tax increase on modest- and middle-income families?

I suppose this government thinks that if they run another slick ad campaign and get another nice voice on the radio, they can avoid these questions. These questions are not avoidable. They're cropping up in community

after community now. People simply do not know how they are going to make ends meet. I don't know what strategy, I don't know what tactic this government has in mind to try to dodge these questions, but these questions are coming. They're going to be very painful in community after community across the province—which brings me again to another issue that is, again, part of this government's budget policy.

With much fanfare, this government has announced that it's taking on the big drug manufacturers—well, that's what the political spin, the media spin is. In fact, they're not taking on the big drug manufacturers; the people they're taking on are Ontario's pharmacists. I'm hearing from them now every day. I hear from the young woman who owns the pharmacy in the town of Rainy River. She has a number of people who she works for. Some are First Nations people who do not have a car. They have no way of travelling the 70 kilometres to the next town to access the drugstore—except that drugstore in that town won't survive either, because it's a small, independent drugstore. They don't have a vehicle so that they can travel 90 kilometres to Fort Frances to access a drugstore.

But the young woman in Rainy River is very clear. She said, "Look, this isn't going to do anything to the big drug manufacturers, but it is going to put my drugstore out of business. The government's going to take this amount of money from me, and yes, they're going to increase the prescription fee by a little bit, but in fact, I'm going to lose a lot of money over here. I'm going to get a little bit of money on this side, but I'm out of business."

Then you go to Emo, the next little town that has a community drugstore. The drugstore owner there, the pharmacist-owner, says the same thing: "I'm out of business." I talk with the people who offer pharmacy services to many of the northern First Nations. That is very extensive pharmacy education work. I'm already receiving emails from them. They're saying, "Look, I'm out of business. I don't know how this is going to create a better Ontario. The 6,000 or 7,000 people who rely on my drugstore, what do they do? Do they call up the Shoppers Drug Mart in Thunder Bay?" Good luck getting the sort of public education and public service from them.

Maybe this government thinks it can avoid this debate simply by focusing on political spin with the editorial board of the Globe and Mail or the editorial board of the Toronto Star, but I have to tell you, out there in Ontario, in the small towns, the rural towns, where there is no Shoppers Drug Mart—by the way, it's the Shoppers Drug Marts that are going to win in this battle. After you put all the little guys out of business, Shoppers Drug Mart will have greater industry concentration, greater control of the market, than ever before. They'll have a near-monopoly situation.

1620

But what is going to happen in all of those small towns, all of those rural villages, those First Nations communities, where it is the community pharmacy, or the

one or two pharmacies in town, that provide service to people? I suppose the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star don't care about that; these people are located more than 70 kilometres from the heart of downtown Toronto, therefore they don't matter. But let me tell you, these are real people and many of them have very serious health conditions, and right now those health conditions are being treated, in many cases, by prescription drug remedies provided by their local pharmacy. It's the local pharmacies who are saying, "We're going to be out of business. There is no way you can take this amount of money from my drugstore, substitute the small amount that this government is offering, and still expect to us stay in business. We'll be gone. We'll be out of here."

Again, the government seems to think that it can slide by this debate just by holding more editorial boards with the Toronto Star and the Toronto Globe and Mail, but I don't think that's going to work.

I simply ask the question: What are seniors in Rainy River supposed to do? Drive 100 kilometres to Fort Frances to get their prescription drug needs filled? What are people who live on a First Nation who don't have a car and don't have bus service supposed to do? Take a taxi 100 kilometres one way to have their needs addressed? What are people who live in small towns and rural areas, where it is the small-town pharmacy that is very much at risk as a result of what this government is doing, supposed to do? I ask that question, in all sincerity, of the Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond to the speech by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, especially on the last part of his speech dealing with small and rural pharmacies. He raises a very valid point, and it's one that I've been happy to have an opportunity to talk about in my constituency office, as well as with the minister.

I think the member is probably aware that the minister has been very public in her acknowledgement and hope for accommodation in terms of small, rural and independent pharmacies in the province of Ontario. We certainly haven't promised anything, and we don't know where this is going to land as of yet, but I think it's fair to say that we are all aware, as members of the Legislative Assembly, of the key role that small, rural, independent pharmacies play in the province of Ontario. None of us wants to be in the position of limiting that service.

I've got a small rural fellow operating in the community of Atikokan. I've had numerous conversations with him. I'm fully aware of his value and the role that he plays in that community. Clearly, we're not interested in seeing him go out of business so that people have to travel two hours west to Fort Frances or two hours east to Thunder Bay to have their scripts filled. Clearly, that's not at all what we're trying to do.

The other part of the speech focused on the HST. I should start by saying that those in the opposition have at least been consistent in terms of their opposition to the HST. They also have been consistent in not portraying

the other half of the story that comes along with the HST, and that's the significant permanent tax reductions that have been put in place, some of which already began fully six months ago, on January 1. The northern energy credit that the member minimizes in his remarks is significant: up to \$130 for a single, up to \$200 for families, in addition to the personal income tax reductions and the other sales tax credits and grants. It provides significant relief for people when it comes to the imposition of the HST, so we're very proud of that.

I will, of course, as a northern member, be paying very close attention to see who is going to support our budget that contains, of course, the northern energy credit for all people in northern Ontario only.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm pleased to comment on the speech of the member from Kenora–Rainy River, especially regarding the hydro rate issue.

There was something that was brought up that I'm surprised hasn't been discussed a lot more in the Legislature, regarding the announcement Friday, April 9, where the provincial government allowed the 11.6% increase to move forward because of what was listed as "needed to maintain the equipment and expand the current systems within the province of Ontario," expecting a little over 8% on May 1, the additional charge in hydro rates, and the additional remaining of the 11.6% to go up on January 1, 2011.

If you look at the impact of HST on July 1 with the additional 8% there, plus the 11.6% and then the green fee that we're looking at, as well as what's going to happen or we expect to happen next year as time-of-day metering, it's going to have a huge impact. I'm speaking to individuals on a regular basis—as a matter of fact, Ned from Apsley, who's quite frankly selling his house. He's moving to Brighton. Certainly the number one aspect that he spoke about—although he didn't say it, but when he spoke about the cost—was the energy cost. He just couldn't afford to live there anymore. It was one of the key aspects of the decision-making process why he decided to move out of there.

You talk about \$10 a month for the northern hydro tax credit. I don't necessarily believe that's going to even equate to the amount of additional charges that are going to be out there.

As well, we had the new time-of-day metering, or however we want to call it, installed in the house. The person installing that went on to explain that, "This time next year, you can expect to be paying double what you are," and that's the people installing it in our house, not knowing who I was. They ended up dealing with my wife at the time when they were discussing this entire impact.

I think it's going to have huge impact, particularly on seniors. They're the individuals who are home through the day, who are using the washing machines, dishwashers and other aspects. It will have a big impact.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to pick up in part where the member from North Bay was speaking about, the other side of the story.

Remember that for about 87% or thereabouts of the monies we expend on disposable income for purchase of goods and services, we already pay both the PST and the GST. So the HST won't make any difference in that regard. Only a small percentage of services will now be attracting, on an overall percentage basis, the additional portion of the PST that's not currently there, and that'll be 8%, not 13%. The member consistently referred to this 13% tax increase, which doesn't exist.

I want to go from there because the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan spoke about the other part of the story being tax reductions, growing the economy, which leads us to the need, quite frankly, to have opportunities for young people to be trained so they can meet the job demands of the new economy. It's why, as part of this budget, we're investing about \$310 million on an annual basis to ensure that some 20,000 new spaces in colleges and universities are available to our young people primarily.

We know that in the years to come and not too-distant future about 70% of our jobs are going to require post-secondary education or training, and we're not meeting that standard today. By adding these additional seats and opportunities for young people, some 20,000 more, we're going to be that much closer to ensuring that our workforce meets the capacities in training and skills in colleges and universities that are going to be demanded of the new economy that's being created in part by our capacity to restructure the tax system, which will take time to flow through, to make sure that we have the future jobs that are necessary in this province.

In addition to providing opportunities with 20,000 new spaces, we're moving to the next generation. We're moving to the online university in Ontario. We're going to provide opportunities for those who may be in remote areas who need specialized training to take opportunities that don't currently exist.

We talk about one little piece, but if we look at the entire budget and the objectives, we can see that it's to build this economy, provide jobs for young people—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to comment on the member from Kenora–Rainy River's comments. It's interesting; he started out and mentioned right off the bat "I will not raise your taxes," the Dalton McGuinty famous speech from 2003. Of course, he went right out later on and raised taxes. The health premium was a substantial tax increase after he promised he wouldn't raise them at all and actually signed the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Now, the government turns around in this budget and talks about the famous harmonized sales tax and all these people who are getting these huge tax breaks. Ask anyone how much their tax break has been on their paycheque. Ask how many people have actually had a

noticeable difference. They can't even tell you, because, do you know what? It's actually pennies. It works out to be pennies as compared to the harmonized sales tax which is coming in, which is like literally thousands of dollars a year per family. That's the difference. They're trying to hide behind this belated tax increase, because they've already given people six years of the health premium, which didn't really go into health care.

1630

If you want to talk a little bit about pharmacies—I don't know who is not hearing about pharmacies. I'm not hearing from Shoppers Drug Mart or Rexall in my riding; I'm hearing from the small pharmacies. I talked to a gentleman the other night who has a small pharmacy-grocery store. He has 19 employees. Do you know what? He's not going to have 19 employees as soon as this goes through. He'll be cut down to probably 12 or 13. What's going to happen? There are going to be seven or eight people whose jobs will be eliminated as a result of the changes that the government has made with the pharmacies.

I'm hearing it every day. I don't know if anyone else is hearing that. We now have literally a pile of letters and emails, probably thousands of them, and that's in a small rural community. I can tell you that people are mad about this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I started out by posing a fairly specific question, and I'm interested that none of the Liberal members even tried to answer it.

The health tax was overwhelmingly a tax on modest- and middle-income people. It was modest- and middle-income people who saw their income taxes payable go up the most under the health tax, and it will be modest- and middle-income people who get hit hardest by the HST. Yet the reality is that we have a substantial number of modest- and middle-income people in Ontario whose incomes have actually dropped. Here you are: People's incomes have dropped, and the cumulative effect of the McGuinty Liberals is to tax those people more than ever.

I simply asked the question: How is that a recipe for people to be better off? And eureka, I didn't hear an answer. I heard some people trying to talk at angles—to triangulate—but I didn't hear an answer.

I asked a second question: How is it going to benefit people in Ontario to put the small independent pharmacies across this province out of business? The member from Thunder Bay, I'll give him credit, actually admitted that this is a problem. I wanted to see if he was going to mention Atikokan, because this is a very serious problem in the town of Atikokan. It's a very serious problem in dozens of communities across this province.

The people who are actually going to benefit in the long run from what the government is doing are the Shoppers Drug Marts. Shoppers Drug Mart will weather this storm because they're huge and they sell just as much in terms of perfume and groceries and other home

wares as they sell in terms of drugs. But what happens in the small communities where there's no Shoppers Drug Mart?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue; that is, to deal with our budget and the budget bill, Bill 16.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I will be taking the full 20 minutes. In that period, I will be talking about some of the broader themes in the budget and what that means for my community in Ottawa Centre. But then, more specifically, I want to talk about schedule 2 of Bill 16, which is the result of Bill 194, a private member's bill that I tabled. I'm very proud and happy to see that An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act is part of this budget bill, and I want to spend some time talking about it.

Let me talk about this very important budget, which has been tabled at a crossroads in our economy. When I say "our economy," I'm talking about the economy in Ontario and our economy in Canada, because we know that in order to have a stronger Canada, we need a strong Ontario and a stronger Ontario economy.

We have just lived through one of the most devastating global recessions in our lifetime; I think we can say that for all of us in this Legislature. One of the most significant recessions has now been referred to as the great recession, akin to the Great Depression in the 1930s, when we saw developed and developing economies around the globe being decimated and thousands of people losing their jobs. Of course, Ontario was not immune to that.

But as we are coming out of 2009 into 2010 and starting to recover from that devastating global recession, we need to make sure that we've got the right set of policies in place that not only will prolong and grow this recovery to make Ontario prosperous and economically healthy, but will also create jobs—jobs which are not just short-term, which we are also creating through the stimulus package, but jobs that are meaningful and that are long-term, because our families—Ontarians—deserve those types of policies. That's exactly what this budget is trying to do. It's trying to create jobs which are sustainable and which are long-term.

The government has done a few things that have been talked about: bringing a very comprehensive tax reform package forward; the harmonization of the GST and the PST to make our businesses more competitive, because they are the ones that create jobs in our economy; making sure we bring effective tax cuts, tax breaks for individual Ontarians, for families in Ontario to make sure that they have more money in their pockets and are able to generate wealth and are able to save money for their retirement; and also, reducing corporate taxes for our small businesses because they are the engine of our economy, both in large cities and small towns in this great province of ours.

But beyond that, we are also doing things like the Green Energy Act, which has resulted in a green revolution, a renaissance, in our province. We are already starting to see the kind of investment that is taking place in the province of Ontario because of the Green Energy Act. We are, in fact, now starting to create jobs in this province which are long-term and sustainable. We are moving away from our traditional manufacturing jobs to something more sophisticated, something more advanced, suited for the 21st century economy we live in. And Ontario has become a leader in that instance to the point where you've got various US states and the federal government in the United States looking at Ontario's Green Energy Act, to the point where you've got a foreign company like Samsung investing \$7 billion of foreign investors' money right here in the province of Ontario. These are the kinds of things we used to look at in other parts of the world and in the United States and say, "Why not us here in Ontario?" It's starting to happen right here in Ontario. So we should be very excited and glad about that, because these economic policies are starting to pay dividends. Not only are we creating good, green jobs, but we are also starting to live in a sustainable and responsible fashion, and we are looking after our environment, bringing our greenhouse gas emissions down in the province of Ontario.

Here are some other things in this budget which are very important in terms of preparing Ontario for the 21st century economy. An important issue that has always been important for me is investment in our post-secondary education. Through this budget and the throne speech before it, the government has outlined a very clear intention to ensure that more and more students in our universities and colleges are graduating. Right now, I think we have a graduation rate of about 62%; the government's intended purpose is to raise it to 70%. That is laudable. I don't think anybody can disagree with that, that we should increase our graduation rate to a higher level. We need to make sure that more Ontarians, young and old alike, are able to go to university and college and get the education they want and be productive members of our society. As a result, through this budget, we are creating 20,000 new spaces for students in our colleges and universities, and that's not just numbers. We are actually putting, through this budget, money behind it to make that happen: \$310 million is being invested through this budget to create those 20,000 new spaces.

Let me give you some perspective: I'm very blessed that in Ottawa Centre I have Carleton University, which I have the privilege of representing. The 20,000 new spaces is equivalent to another Carleton University, which is a very large university. They will get their fair share. We've got the University of Ottawa in the city. We've got La Cité collégiale, Algonquin College and other post-secondary institutions which will all benefit from these additional spaces.

We also continue to invest more money in the Second Career strategy program, creating 30,000 more spaces, training opportunities, for unemployed workers. I've had

quite a few of those unemployed workers in my riding who have been trying to get access to the Second Career strategy, and this will allow them the opportunity to do that. So that's one aspect.

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Number two, investments in child care: \$63.5 million per year of additional new money is being invested to ensure that we have child care. These are the dollars which the federal government used to give to the province—and they've now backed out, unfortunately. What did this government do? This government did not run away from that obligation, from those parents and those children. They said, "No, we are continuing to invest in our children." That's 302 child care spaces in my city of Ottawa. I've had parents and child care workers tell me, "Thank you. This is a very good investment."

Full-day learning is another very important aspect, where we're making sure that our four- and five-year-olds are getting the education needed to grow in this economy and to be a boost to our economy. In Ottawa, there are 39 schools which will be providing full-day learning in the first phase, and two of them are in my riding: W.E. Gowling school and Cambridge public school. Both of these schools are in low-income neighbourhoods in my community. I'm very excited to see that the full-day learning is going to those two communities in my riding of Ottawa Centre, because that's where you've got a lot of low-income parents, a lot of single mothers who are doing two jobs and raising their children. That's where we're making sure that those children have the resources and the tools to get the right sort of education and to develop and be a productive member of the community in Ottawa—not to mention that \$245 million over the next two years in terms of capital investment in our schools is a very important step.

Reducing poverty is another very important issue. As we know, as of March 31, the minimum wage increased to \$10.25, one of the highest in Canada—a significant increase in minimum wage since this government came into office in 2003.

We were talking about taxes earlier on. There are a lot of tax credits for low- to mid-income Ontarians and seniors with fixed income, as well, that are coming into place. Just like GST credits, as of July 1 there's going to be a new Ontario sales tax credit, which will be up to \$260 per adult and per child, which is very significant, based on your income. Not to mention, we've got property tax credits which are, I think, up to \$1,025 for seniors and up to \$900 for non-seniors—again, income-tested to make sure that those members of our community with low- to mid-income or seniors with fixed incomes are the ones who are benefiting from it.

Then, of course, there's the stimulus package, which is still creating jobs. I see all kinds of construction that is going on—Carleton University has two towers being built right now, and the provincial government invested \$25 million; there's Parkdale Market in my riding, where they're revamping this whole local farmers' market;

cleaning up the park—to make sure that we've got that community infrastructure in place for our community. There's a significant investment in the YMCA in my riding, the Metro Y, to make sure that families have an affordable place to get recreational services. I can go on and on. In Ottawa alone, we're talking about \$400 million in stimulus funding thus far, creating jobs, fixing public infrastructure and renewing community infrastructure—a very important step which is welcomed by all members of my community.

Next Thursday, I have the honour to be at the groundbreaking for the Ottawa Chinatown Gateway. We're actually building a gateway in Chinatown, which is in my riding, to—

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you. I know Minister Chan has been a big supporter of the Chinese gateway, where we're partnering with the Chinese government. It is to mark the contribution of the Chinese community in Ottawa, for all their hard work over many years and what they've given to our city, and also to create another tourist hub in our great city, so that when tourists come into the city they know where to go. We actually have been successful in getting tourist designation signs for Little Italy and Chinatown on Highway 417 as well. So it's very exciting—

Mr. Mike Colle: You don't have a Little Italy in Ottawa.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Oh, we have a very exciting Little Italy in Ottawa, Mr. Colle. You should come and visit. We've got some great Italian restaurants in our Little Italy.

Mr. Mike Colle: Name one. Name one.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Oh, I don't want to be biased. There are so many good ones. I go and visit all of them.

There are all these things to make sure that we, as a community, are growing, but also we are enhancing our economy.

At this point—I'm mindful of the time—I want to move on to another very important topic, which is close to the city of Ottawa, and that is schedule 2 of Bill 16, which is an amendment to the City of Ottawa Act of 1999. Essentially, schedule 2 creates an independent board of public health in the city of Ottawa. Up to now, today, through section 12 of the City of Ottawa Act, the city council is the board of public health. It's the city councillors who make all decisions as they relate to public health. I think a lot of members will agree with me that that could pose certain problems, because I personally don't think that politicians should be making decisions around public health. Those are science-based decisions, and they should be made by experts. That has been an issue for my community of Ottawa for some time.

I was honoured to bring in a private member's bill, Bill 194, which I tabled on June 3, 2009. This legislation asked that an independent board of public health be created. I am extremely grateful to the government that they adopted that bill and made it into a government bill,

through the budget, Bill 16. I'm very excited. My community is very happy about that.

Basically, I tabled Bill 194, pursuant to a city council motion of October 22, 2008, because the city council has been debating this issue for some time in Ottawa. Through a very in-depth analysis, they came up with certain recommendations. Just to give you a bit of an overview, those recommendations were:

- to create a board of health comprised of 11 members appointed by the city: six councillors and five citizen representatives;

- that the board of health appoint a medical officer of health and the associate officers of health, to be employees of the board of health;

- that the medical officer of health report directly to the board of health;

- that the city of Ottawa provide to the board public health unit employees, who shall remain city of Ottawa employees, so that the funding is coming from the city of Ottawa. By the way, 75% of it is uploaded by the province, so we've got good co-operation going there;

- that the board of health make recommendations to city council on any issues within city council's jurisdiction that involve health considerations—example: non-smoking bylaws; and

- that the board of health report annually to city council on its operations.

Essentially what I did through Bill 194 was take those elements of the city council motion of October 22, 2008, and incorporate them in the bill, to make sure that the bill represents the will and intent of our elected city council.

I briefly talked about why that is important. It's extremely important because, again, us politicians, of course, have certain expertise in public policy matters, but we're not experts in public health matters. That should stay within the purview of those experts. Those decisions should be made by those experts, not politicians, because sometimes—and I'm being generous—when we are looking at issues, we have partisan objectives, we have ideological reasons and we push for certain ideas. That's part and parcel of a democracy.

That may be good for public policy issues, but when it comes to public health issues, it could be very troubling, and we wanted to avoid that. We wanted to make sure that in our municipalities, those public health decisions—because we're dealing with the health of individuals; we're dealing with the health of our community; we're dealing with the health of our family members—are made by an independent board of public health.

It is good governance, it's a more efficient and effective way of governing, and it is the right thing to do. It removes politics from decisions which are extremely important and relate to our health.

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This type of change is no different than having a police services board, which all of our municipalities have, where you've got a board which is made up of members of the community and has the oversight capability and capacity. The same thing with community

housing: They have independent boards with city councillors sitting, and then you have some tenants' groups and you've got members of the community sitting around the table and looking after governance issues. The same model is applying here. The city of Toronto has a similar model. A lot of other regional municipalities have similar models. Ottawa was behind in time, and I'm very happy to see that it's moving forward. Through schedule 2 of Bill 16, we are making sure that Ottawa will have an independent board of public health.

I had the opportunity to be on the board of a community health centre, the Centretown Community Health Centre in my riding, where I learned about these issues in quite an intimate fashion, before I was elected. I was very happy to pursue this matter once elected. I just want to take the opportunity to read you some quotes about what people in the know locally think about this issue.

Dr. Isra Levy, who's the medical officer of health for the city of Ottawa, said, "The board of health provides oversight and leadership to the professional staff of the health department. It is critically important that it has the time and expertise to focus on public health matters. I want to commend the vision shown by provincial and municipal elected leaders in their commitment to improve the governance model."

Jack McCarthy, who is the executive director of the Somerset West Community Health Centre in my riding, said, "A board of health for Ottawa that will now include members with population health expertise is a big step in the right direction. I welcome this important change."

Simone Thibault, who is the executive director of the Centretown Community Health Centre, also in my riding, said, "I am pleased that this bill is supporting Ottawa city council's direction in establishing an independent board of health. The residents of Ottawa will certainly benefit from increased attention paid to this essential service."

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Diane Deans, who is the chairperson of the Community and Protective Services Committee, for moving this issue forward through city council—her leadership has to be acknowledged—and all city councillors who have worked on this matter.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my staff for helping me, working through this file when I initially tabled this. I want in particular to mention Jackie Choquette, who's my executive assistant, and Geoff Turner, who is with my office here in Toronto, who worked very hard on this matter moving forward. A big thanks also to Tara Partington, who is the legislative counsel who helped me draft this bill. Her counsel was very important. Big thanks to the ministers and offices of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for their guidance on this very important issue, because what essentially we are doing by passing schedule 2 of Bill 16 is helping to create a healthy Ottawa. We're making sure that those very important public health decisions which are made in the city of Ottawa are made in light of sound science and not

ideology. I'm very proud that this step is finding favour. Thus, I ask all the members to support Bill 16.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been six and a half hours of debate on second reading of Bill 16.

Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Madam Speaker, we would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to the government House leader's intervention, we will now go to questions and comments. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am pleased to have a chance to respond briefly to the member for Ottawa Centre, who also serves as the president of the Liberal Party, I know, and, as such, you would anticipate and expect him to bring the presentation of the government this afternoon defending the party line, which he did very well.

But I have a question that I've raised on a number of occasions. I'm going to keep asking it, because I have to question the integrity of the government's balanced budget plan. I raised this this afternoon. I've raised it in a number of other contexts. But the fact is, the government claims to be planning to balance the budget over time, over an eight-year period. What we've seen in the budget papers seems to lack credibility. In fact, when I suggested that earlier this afternoon, the Minister of Education, while heckling me, said that in order to keep the budget increases at below 2% per year, that would require laying off nurses, laying off, I think she said, firefighters, and a number of public servants would have to be fired, she said. But the fact is, the government's plan is to contain and restrain spending to less than 2% a year. That's their plan, and that's what she seemed to be criticizing, although I don't think she was maybe listening to exactly what I was saying.

But I would ask the member for Ottawa Centre to explain to this House how the government plans to contain and restrain spending below 2% a year, which again is in your plan—it's in the budget papers document—after 2012, I believe, and it's only by restraining program spending to below 2% per year that you claim to be able to balance the budget in eight years' time.

I'd certainly be interested in hearing what your thoughts are on that matter. I haven't yet heard an explanation from the government as to how they're going to do this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened, I must admit, to part of the member for Ottawa Centre's speech. Some parts of it were very much aimed at his constituency of Ottawa Centre. But I too want to ask a question of the government, and since he is also president of the Ontario Liberal Party, perhaps, next to the Premier, he's the person to answer this.

I read, the other day, an economist who has looked at the HST says that the HST in gross will take another \$7

billion out of the pockets of Ontario residents, and he makes the point that most of that money will come from modest- and middle-income families—I haven't heard anyone refute that \$7-billion estimate.

Now, of course there are going to be some tax reductions for corporations, and the government is going to mail out a few cheques for one year only—I think they hope to deflect attention from the tax increase. But I did want to ask: How does taking \$7 billion a year, primarily from modest- and middle-income families in Ontario, many of whom actually have lower incomes now than they had a few years ago because of the huge loss of jobs in manufacturing and elsewhere—how are those families going to be better off? When you take \$7 billion out of their pockets when their income is lower than ever, how is that going to leave them better off?

No one in the government has addressed this issue yet, so hopefully the president of the Liberal Party of Ontario can address it now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes on this topic. Once again, there seems to be a bit of a theme evolving here where members are rising in their places and not responding to the speeches that have been made but posing questions. It seems like they're trying to change the channel a little bit in terms of what has been responded to. I'll have a turn at it as well, and I'll pose my own question back to some of the members.

There are those who have taken the opportunity, when speaking on the budget, to comment on the HST, of course, as I have said on a number of occasions here, only telling half the story, in my opinion, as has consistently been the case for over one year now. I guess I would ask the question: If it is people of modest and middle incomes who will be hardest hit by the imposition of the HST, then why is it that we do not hear a hue and cry from poverty groups across the province of Ontario, lining up or marching on the lawn of Queen's Park in opposition to the HST as it's going to arrive on July 1?

In fact, the opposite is true. We have seen a significant number of groups involved in the struggle against poverty in the province of Ontario who have very publicly supported the HST, because they have come to the conclusion that the HST is a good policy for those of modest and middle incomes. They have very much come to that conclusion.

I pose that question back, and perhaps the next time the member from Kenora-Rainy River speaks, he'll have an opportunity to answer that one as well.

I would add an additional question: Why is it that Ken Lewenza, the leader of the Canadian Auto Workers union in Ontario, wrote a letter to the leaders of the two opposition parties asking them to tone down their rhetoric when it comes to the HST. He was very direct. He thought the rhetoric had gone over the top. I remember his letter very clearly, especially asking members of the NDP to just tone it down a little bit.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Taking economic direction from the Canadian Auto Workers is really an exciting opportunity. I think that's something the Liberals and NDP may want to do, but I don't think the Conservatives are going to be looking in that direction. Although, under the Conservative government, the CAW added more workers to their union rolls than any other government. Ontario was expanding. There were a million new jobs in the province at that time, and union workers, I think, were very pleased to have those automotive jobs during the time of the Harris government. Those jobs, of course, have disappeared. Many of those jobs have disappeared under the current regime.

1700

I was talking earlier, in a two-minute question and comment period, about the promises that this government has made in the past and how many of those promises have somehow fallen by the wayside and not come to fruition. There was a promise in 2007 that they would hire 9,000 nurses. In fact, the reality of the situation was that over the next year or so, the nurses had been laid off.

They had talked about 35,000 new long-term-care beds, and it's very questionable as to how many beds have been announced or built by this government. I know we built 20,000 long-term-care beds in Ontario. Can you imagine what the situation in Ontario would have been, as bad as it is today, if we hadn't built those 20,000 beds? I know the government tried to take credit for the last beds under that program that were built, but there have been precious few new long-term-care beds built in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the honourable members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Kenora–Rainy River, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Halton for their feedback on what I was talking about. I welcome the two questions that were posed, one by the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and the other from Kenora–Rainy River, and let me do my best to answer those questions.

As to the question from the member from Wellington–Halton Hills on how we're going to balance the budget: We have to take a combination of approaches here. We need to make sure that, of course, we restrain our spending, and we're doing that through different mechanisms in terms of freezing our salaries and those of the non-bargaining OPS and broader public service.

But another way to ensure that we are able to deal with this deficit is to grow our economy to make sure that we have jobs that are being created in this economy. That is the best possible way, as we are recovering from this recession, that we can deal with the issue of balancing our budget. Already, we're seeing that Ontario is leading in North America in terms of economic growth—1.6% of its GDP. It's reported by StatsCan and other independent

economic think tanks that Ontario is leading the pack, creating more jobs, and that is how we're going to balance the budget.

As to the question posed by the member from Kenora–Rainy River: I have not seen any study that shows that \$7 billion will come out of the pockets of Ontarians because of the HST, and I will be very interested to see that report you are referring to. We are talking about \$2.5 billion extra because of the HST, and all of that \$2.5 billion extra is being sent back to Ontarians either through personal income tax cuts or corporate tax cuts. That is why this plan is a revenue-neutral plan. It creates equity in the way we conduct taxes in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to join in today's debate on Bill 16, the 2010 budget bill.

For a document that's 196 pages long, it really doesn't contain much information. Within those 196 pages, I do not see any clear plan to create jobs and reduce the deficit, or creative ways to return Ontario back to its former prosperity.

When Minister Duncan tabled the budget on March 25, it proved to Ontarians that this government has no real plan for Ontario. In a world where all other jurisdictions are introducing creative new ways to recover from the recession and create jobs, we see a government which, instead of coming up with new ideas, has left it up to the taxpayer to fund their usual tax-and-spend Liberal policies.

This budget document does not deal with what taxpayers consider two very important issues, the deficit and the debt. This budget has tripled our reliance on federal welfare payments. It has doubled the debt, and our deficit is now higher than that of the other nine provinces combined. Now we have before us a budget bill with no plan, no roadmap. This document does not give a sense of relief to the young families who want to buy a new home, to the seniors who are dealing with skyrocketing hydro bills, to the middle class families who are looking for some relief from taxes or to all of those Ontarians who suffered job losses during the economic recession.

Right now I'd like to focus on jobs. It's what Ontarian families need right now instead of more taxes. Ontario has one of the highest jobless rates in the country at 9.1%. Ontario suffered a net loss of 3,900 full-time jobs in March alone. I ask you, where are all of the jobs that the Premier promised? As of March, the McGuinty Liberals are still more than 100,000 jobs short of their own target.

Under the PC governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, Ontario hit the one million mark in manufacturing jobs. Dalton McGuinty inherited these jobs, but now there are only less than 800,000 manufacturing jobs remaining, fewer than what existed at the end of the Bob Rae era. Of the 279,000 manufacturing jobs lost by McGuinty's Liberals, 206,000 of them disappeared before the economic recession was at its peak.

The one place where McGuinty seems determined to create jobs is in the public sector. The sunshine list of public employees earning more than \$100,000 has tripled since the McGuinty Liberals came to power in 2003. The public sector has grown at a rate of eight times that of the private sector. This is not sustainable growth. The private sector needs an even playing field so that they can create jobs and boost the economy like we have in the past. Stimulating growth in the private sector is the key to getting Ontario growing again.

As I mentioned, another key item that taxpayers are concerned about is the debt. The debt will increase from \$148.7 billion in 2003-04 to \$289.3 billion in 2012-13. This confirms that in nine years Dalton McGuinty will have saddled Ontario families with double their debt.

Even though we already knew it, the 2010 budget also confirmed that last year Ontario became a have-not province. We received some \$300 million from the federal government last year, and Ontario is now expecting to get \$972 million in equalization payments from the better-performing provinces this year—nearly triple over last year's. And who knows what will be coming in subsequent years?

Families need to know now more than ever that they are getting the best bang for their buck. For most families, this is particularly true for the health care system. Young families want to know that as they grow their families, doctors will be there to take care of their sick child. Seniors want to know that as they age, health and long-term-care systems will be there to support them. Middle-aged families want to know that their health care system will be there to provide preventive measures to keep them healthy as they age. I think many agree that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

This budget increases health care spending by \$2.6 billion, from \$43.5 billion in 2009-10 to \$46.1 billion. What have we got for the new money? We cannot forget that, to date, taxpayers have paid \$15 billion for Dalton McGuinty's health tax, yet despite all that extra revenue on the ground, we continue to see the challenges in health care.

I've spoken in the Legislature before about the health care concerns the residents in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon have. I was alarmed to learn last summer that a review of the underserviced area program could mean that communities in Dufferin-Caledon will lose financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors. Many families in my constituency cannot find a doctor because my community is so underserviced.

Six years ago, Premier McGuinty promised to recruit and train more doctors. He also promised that no person would go without needed medical attention. Six years later, nearly 20,000 residents in Dufferin-Caledon are still waiting for a family physician. The town of Caledon in my riding has experienced the most significant population growth, and the Central West LHIN is projected to be the fastest-growing region in the province over the next 10 years. Based on the current physician-to-patient ratio of one doctor for every 1,380 people, the

recommended number of physicians is 41. By this formula, Caledon alone, which is only half of my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, is underserved by 18 physicians. The government's own report prepared by the Central West LHIN clearly indicates that Caledon is underserved for primary health care physicians.

1710

All health studies indicate that access to a family doctor is essential for early detection and management of chronic diseases. It is also the only way a family can access the many other services available to them through the family health teams. Families in my riding are paying the McGuinty health tax, yet many do not have a family doctor to show for it.

I rose in the House numerous times last fall to speak on the plight of children's aid societies across Ontario. Minister, 36 of the 51 children's aid societies in Ontario filed section 14 requests with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services last fall, meaning they could not fulfill their legislative mandate with the budget cuts the minister had forced on them midway through the last fiscal year. Historically, there had never been so many section 14 requests filed with the ministry.

The services that children's aid societies provide are mandated by legislation. They have a legislative responsibility to respond when children are in jeopardy and respond in a timely way. Some children's aid societies across the province were forced to cut front-line services and staff from their offices as a result of the changes last summer. While the government provided some CASs with an 11th-hour band-aid, approximately half of the CASs will begin this new fiscal year with a shortfall of up to 10%.

Much of the children's aid societies' work, especially in early intervention to prevent long-term involvement with families, is not funded. Without this investment, there is a great risk of escalating numbers of children coming into long-term or permanent care. Many children's aid societies have been forced to cut or eliminate family preservation and other preventive programs for high-risk families in many regions across our province.

Children's aid societies are concerned that the full impact of the economic downturn has not been felt yet, and now caseloads are beginning to climb due to the economic downturn, with no provision to address these increases. According to the children's aid societies, they are starting to report an increase in child abuse and neglect intake calls, but there is no provision in the budget to enable children's aid societies to meet the growing demand for child protection intervention.

Peel CAS, or the children's aid society in my riding, believes their crisis is a result of the ministry's decision to roll back their economic adjustment to lessen inflation and cut their budgets in the middle of last year's fiscal year. That is not what I would call appropriate financial planning. It is simply not fair for these children's aid societies, who are legislatively mandated to provide care and protection for vulnerable children, to be given the

funding from one hand only to have the other hand take it away halfway through the year.

The region of Peel receives the lowest per capita funding of any jurisdiction in Ontario. They serve 11% of the child population and operate in one of the province's most disadvantaged regions, yet barely 3% of all child welfare dollars are invested in Peel region. Peel has the highest rate of children living in poverty in the GTA and they serve the fastest-growing and most diverse region in Ontario. All Peel is looking for is fair allocation of the funds to meet the needs of their growing community. Their current funding model has placed them at the back of the line, and the race hasn't even started yet.

I'd like to turn our attention to the developmental service sector and how they will be most affected by the 2010 Liberal budget. First, let me say that community living agencies across Ontario do an incredible job providing services within our communities for families living with a developmental disability. Their commitment to the community and to the clients is second to none, and for that they should be acknowledged. But Community Livings are feeling let down by the McGuinty Liberals. They are disappointed that this government has decided not to honour their promises made in 2007 to provide funds this fiscal year to address operational pressures in the developmental services sector, and there are many. Community Living has continued to deliver their message concerning the serious ramifications of the government going back on their promises for the sector.

Community Living Ontario has warned the McGuinty Liberals of the effect of not following through on this year's commitment to funding, and it will have significant negative effects on the sector and people supported by it. Based on the premise that the promised funding would be forthcoming, these funds are largely accounted for in the financial commitments that agencies have already made for the coming year. In many cases, the funds were to address contractual commitments, increased premium costs based on benefits, increased WSIB costs, facilitation of settlements for more than 50 agencies that are in bargaining at present, and non-negotiable contractual and legislative costs, such as pay equity. Community living agencies are now forced to reduce expenditures, which, for families serviced by this great organization, means layoffs and/or permanently reduced services yet again.

The budget announced \$36 million in new funding in the developmental service sectors to address urgent needs for some of those individuals and families who are facing crisis situations. While it sounds great on the outside, what many do not know is that, currently, there is a waiting list of almost 12,000 people waiting for residential service and more than 7,000 waiting for other services. This does not begin to help the families who are struggling to find residential care for their child, the families who need respite care or the families who are unselfishly taking care of their child with a developmental disability at home with very little assistance. It is too bad that we are living in a province where a family has to go into crisis mode before their needs will be met.

Like I said earlier, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and the same can be said here. Failure to provide transitional supports at the right time causes harm to individuals and families and causes society even more in the long run. Families are increasingly finding themselves in desperate and vulnerable situations as a result of the McGuinty Liberals' continuing inattentiveness to their very real needs. People are at increasing risk of falling through the widening and predictable gaps in the system, resulting in potential harm and even death.

This is why the PC caucus and I continually say that this is a no-news budget. Families are still waiting for doctors; children's aid societies are still waiting for the support to provide legislated, mandated services to children and families; and the developmental sector is still searching for support from your government that was promised over three years ago. It's an unfortunate indication of the government's interest in trying out new programs and introducing new programs instead of actually focusing on what the government has already committed and actually trying to fund those sufficiently. I think it's a terrible shame that we are looking at new programs such as full-day learning when there is an entire sector of child care providers that are literally going to be eliminated from their business model because they will no longer have a business model that makes sense when you eliminate five- and six-year-olds out of their business model.

You had an opportunity with this budget to actually focus on some programs that are already in place that simply need to be properly funded instead of adding new baubles and new initiatives. It's an opportunity that I believe the Liberal government missed. I think they were more interested in trying new programs and getting people to stop thinking about the programs that they have not been able to fund sufficiently. I've highlighted a few in my speech today, but the obvious ones for Dufferin-Caledon are community living agencies and parents who are in desperate need of programs like Passport and special services at home. Instead, we are funding some new programs which I also don't believe in the long run we are going to be able to financially sustain under the debt and the deficit that we are incurring every day through the Liberal rule.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just wanted to support a couple of things that the member from Dufferin-Caledon has talked about, and that is the poverty that she's experiencing in her part of the world, something that we, in Toronto, experienced for a long, long time. People used to attack us all the time for being a city with all these services serving the poor—welfare—and everyone. I'm really happy—I'm not happy; I'm not happy that poverty is spreading—I'm not—but it's interesting that poverty has spread beyond Toronto and that there are other communities outside of Toronto in the GTA suffering a great deal because the money is not there, and all of a sudden, people are finding themselves in trouble

socially and economically, and they're looking for services that are not there. As a result, people like the member from Dufferin–Caledon are looking for fairness in funding models as they relate to hospital services and/or social services.

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She is right to raise it because it has been a concern that I have known about for quite some time, because I've had deputations in my office with people from the GTA talking about, how can we help them deal with this growing problem in the GTA and, I suspect, beyond?

The other comment she makes has to do with Community Living, but that's not the only organization that is under assault. There are hundreds of non-profit agencies that provide incredible services to people who struggle, whether they be social, psychological or economic, and they're looking for support. They've been working with part-time staff for 15 years and they haven't been able to put full-time staff to provide the supports. They're not there.

She's right to raise those issues and it's important for politicians of all political parties to hear them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'd like to add a few comments on the presentation by the member from Dufferin–Caledon and even on the comments from the member from Trinity–Spadina.

We must not forget one thing when we come to this House and speak about what the government is, what the government represents and what the government should do or shouldn't do. Everything we do is aimed at making our people feel better or provide better government. They know that the government does not address one particular issue with the presentation of their own budget. They have to take into consideration everything, all kinds of services that the government delivers to the people of Ontario. Be they seniors; people in need of affordable housing, health care, education; single parents; single mothers; or people looking for jobs, they have to all be addressed in the context of the budget, and then the delivery of those programs from the government.

It's not an easy job. Both of the people on the other side had the opportunity to be on this side of the House. They know how it works, especially when we are dealing with an economic situation as we did, where we had to take, if you will, the bull by the horns and say, "If we have to borrow, if we have to increase the debt, whatever. But we can't see our people losing their jobs. We have to house the people. This is the time."

Those are not easy decisions. No government wants to address that. But we did it and we did it the right way. We were the first ones to address children's issues, poverty issues. I think we were the first ones to directly initiate those particular situations. Those are three of many that the government faces. I hope the opposition understands that. I hope that we will move on with the budget—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: One of the government members suggested earlier this afternoon that some of the comments that members were making with respect to some of the speeches that were being given today weren't particularly on point because they didn't relate to what was being said. In this particular case, I am pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon, which I think are exactly spot on, both in her capacity as the critic for community and social services, for children and youth services, and as the excellent member representing the constituents of Dufferin–Caledon.

What she's talking about and the problem that we have with respect to this government's budget is, we've got this huge increase in spending, but what do we have to show for it? She gave some very salient examples, one being in health care, where we've spent over \$15 billion in health tax over the last few years, but what have we got to show for it? We still have a huge number of people in Dufferin–Caledon, and I suspect in all of our ridings across Ontario, who are still without a family physician, which is absolutely essential in developing responses in dealing with early intervention and the proper management of chronic conditions and other illnesses.

She also mentioned the urgent situation that's being faced by children's aid societies across the province of Ontario, the concerns they have with respect to funding and the fact that they are providing mandated services. These are services they absolutely have to provide, yet this government is not providing them with the resources that they need in order to do their job. I would say this is especially important in the context of today's economy, where we're seeing more and more families that are increasingly stressed by their economic circumstances. That, in turn, puts an extra stress on the children's aid societies, because there are more and more families needing their support. This is something that hasn't been addressed adequately by this government in this budget.

Finally, with respect to the developmental services sector, I wish I could say more on this, because this is a situation that urgently requires attention. Each and every one of us has families coming into our office every day, parents who are desperate to find places for their adult children to live. We can and must do more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? There being no more questions and comments, the member from Dufferin–Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the comments to the members from Trinity–Spadina, York West and Whitby–Oshawa.

I think I'd like to leave the debate of the budget with one point. It is that we have a responsibility to actually fund the legislative programs that we've already committed to as a government. I say that collectively, because there are pieces of legislation on the books right now that were passed by an NDP government, a PC government and, of course, a Liberal government. We have all participated in seeing the value of those programs.

What I think is so frustrating for us and our communities is the announcements are made, the programs are announced, and then we see down the road that, in fact, they are not funded. Any program that is not going to be funded sufficiently is setting itself up for failure.

I think that we could have done a better job in this budget of actually looking at the programs that we currently provide to Ontario residents and to Ontario communities and ensuring that, in fact, they are properly funded right now, before we look at any new programs and any new, exciting ideas. We have lots of ideas. All of us could come up with 10 ideas today of new programs that we would like to see funded by the provincial government. But the reality is we also have to look at the fiscal situation and ask, "Can we do it, and can we sustain it?"

This budget shows, more than anything for me, that you cannot keep announcing new programs and not make a commitment or admit that you are not sufficiently funding the ones that are already in place.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I really was looking forward to speaking to this bill, because the focus of my remarks is going to be about the corporations and the corporate tax cuts. I hope to take the whole 20 minutes, if I can, just to—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ten minutes: How could that be? How can one deliver a speech in 10 minutes? It's not possible. I can't believe it. I hope the Liberals are going to give me their 10 minutes if we have unanimous consent.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Why wouldn't you want to do that?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got to get going.

I've got to tell you, I've been awfully worried in the last 10 or 15 years about what is happening in this country and in this province with respect to who it is that we blame when we have problems in our economy.

What I have witnessed over the last 15 or 20 years that I've been around here is that we are not blaming the rich for their excesses. We have, for the last 15 or 20 years, begun to blame the poor. We have begun to attack those who are on welfare. We call them all sorts of names: undeserving, welfare bums, cheats. We go after single mothers. We go after the employment insurance cheats. We go after those who are on workers' comp. We go after them because they're not legitimately there; they're probably faking an injury.

We've been doing it for a long, long time, and it used not to be this way. The focus of our anger in the old days used to be those who had a whole lot of money. We used to support the working men and women, those who had unions, because we understood that if you were in a union, you were after better wages, better benefits—God bless—pensions. We all thought those were good things

that we all aspired to, not just some workers but all workers. We have changed things around. It's not the rich we go after now. We go after the poor, and we go after the unionized workers. We see that more at the federal level. Although we see it here, too; it's less pronounced, much more subtle, but we see it here as well. I think we've got to deal with that, in my humble view.

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I think what we've got to deal with is this problem that somehow we have to continue cutting corporate taxes in order to create jobs. Both the Harper Conservatives and the McGuinty Liberals are committed to that strategy. They fundamentally believe it, or they are persuaded to believe in it because there are people with the pecunia persuading, convincing them, however gently, or with the power of the money, to say, "We need to cut corporate taxes. We've got to create jobs, and this is the only way to do it." If you listen to members, some who are here and some who are not here, that's the line they push. I suspect there will be two-minute retorts talking about how good this initiative is.

The Liberals at the provincial level are giving away five billion bucks to the corporations. Nay, whether they deliver jobs or not, whether they create jobs or not, it is irrelevant. We simply give it away. Here, take it. There is no guarantee of any job to be created—none. It is just money we give away on the promise that they will.

For the last 20 years, federally under Liberals, provincially under Conservatives, now federally under Tories, and provincially under Liberals, it's the same story. They keep giving our money away, and someone's got to pay. You don't give away those kinds of dollars without someone in the middle class having to dig deep to pay for that tax cut. It doesn't come cheap.

This Liberal government says we've got a huge deficit. It used to be \$25 billion; magically it went down to \$21 billion. Yet they've got \$5 billion to give away to corporations—\$5 billion. We've got a deficit. These fine Liberals here, my friends, some of you are happy to give away to 97% of the public an income tax cut. We've got a deficit, I remind you—big. Now it's \$22 billion instead of \$25 billion.

We need money, yet you've got a revenue minister with his perpetual smile saying, "Yes, 93% of you are getting an income tax cut." He says that with a nice smile. It's supposed to make us feel good, but we've got a deficit. Someone's got to pay for the deficit, yet the government seems to have money to give me an income tax cut.

Do you understand? I think it's wrong. Something doesn't add up in this little southern Italian mind. It doesn't add up. I just don't get it. If you need money, why do you give it away?

For the last 15 or 20 years, we have given everything that the corporations have wanted. The free trade agreement was about creating jobs; it was about doing something good for the corporations. Twenty years later, wages are going down; they're flatlined or going down.

We're making less today than some people were making in 1980. We've given the corporations a dream to be fulfilled on a promise that they would create jobs and that they would be more productive, and their productivity would increase.

Yet my good buddy Mark Carney—actually he's not a buddy; I don't really know him. Mark Carney said "what everyone on Bay Street knows: The largest Canadian corporations are doing a terrible job at increasing productivity and, therefore, at raising Canadian living standards and competing internationally. He noted that productivity had actually declined through this recession when during every other recession it has gone up.

"He left no doubt who was responsible: 'In general, while there is always more to do, governments have put in place conditions for a productivity revival. Business, thus far, has disappointed.'" But we keep giving billions away because the corporations say it's going to create jobs. There has never, now or before, been any evidence put forth that it actually creates jobs, but we actually give the money away. I don't get it.

You have Mark Carney saying that governments are spending—from the taxpayer, from those left who have some money to pay—for productivity purposes by giving it to corporations, money they put aside for their own investments, and yet when it comes to making our workforce more productive, they're not there, but that is the intent of giving our money to them. For the last 20 years we haven't seen that.

We see more and more part-time workers than ever before. We see more college professors being part-time than ever before. Half of our workforce in community colleges are part-time contract workers. We see university professors in many of our universities—part-time contract workers.

I thought it was going to be better. I thought that this climate of giving away so many dollars to the corporations was going to create a better place for people, for working men and women. It's not doing that. Where is that dream of ours that we are losing? We give it to be more productive, and we're not. So why are we giving the money away? Why do you do that? How do you defend it, especially when the facts are clear, as I'm stating them, as I think other people have stated them, when you know you have a serious deficit? The corporation is, after all, managed by people, and presumably those people live in this society, beings in the world, not outside of the world, and therefore, they ought to make a contribution to that society which they are exploiting daily.

So don't give them any more money. Take it back. Take it back and create real good jobs. Direct that money to the corporations that are indeed creating jobs. Direct that money to the manufacturing sector that is indeed creating the jobs and take it away from those that are not.

Those income tax cuts that we're getting—we don't need them. We need those dollars to reduce the deficit, create good jobs, keep people employed, make sure that the non-profit sector that has been working for 15 years

doing good work has enough money to be able to help the undeserving, the poor, those who desperately need governments to be there to support them. That's what we need the money for. Help me, some good, left-leaning Liberals; help me. Do a two-minuter to tell me that you agree with me, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Mike Colle: I was going to stand up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Sorry. You both stood up at the same time. Pick one.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Trinity–Spadina has raised some very thought-provoking questions, and that is the role of governments in trying to encourage corporations through tax cuts to create jobs.

For some of us Liberals, this is a very difficult thing because I can remember being in this House when the Harris government was very pronounced in the fact that tax cuts would create jobs. That was their very strong belief. I can remember even that Chris Stockwell, when he was in this House, said he didn't think it was going to really be wise to do it, especially if you've got a deficit. Even Chris Stockwell, who's a Conservative, was saying that.

But the dilemma is that governments are caught in the reality of this economic world. What the pressure is is that there are so many companies who really don't give a darn whether they're in Ontario, Guatemala or Peru; they will go anywhere, just like the Celtic tiger. When Ireland lowered all their tax rates, they came into Ireland—everybody went to Ireland. I can remember a neighbour of mine who moved off Duplex—he's going to Ireland. You know what happened to the Irish economy? It was the low-tax economy.

You know, that tiger is now a pussycat, because all those companies with those low tax rates took off and went to Estonia, and then Estonia collapsed and became a pussycat. So I think you've got a point there. But the reality is: How do you keep these companies here; how do you make it attractive? One of the things they keep saying is, "We're not going to come or stay in this province—we're not going build cars here, we're not going do manufacturing, we're not going to do whatever we do—unless there's a competitive tax regime." That's the reality we're caught in, in this year 2010. It's not—

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: How do you make it competitive? That's a very good question. How do you make Ontario competitive? You can't make it competitive in just tax regimes; you've got to make it competitive in other aspects as well.

The reasons that companies move to other jurisdictions: First among them is probably taxes. Another is the cost of other things. Certainly one of the principle areas would be health care—a good health care situation.

Education would certainly be another reason why a company would move.

The cost of electricity would be a reason for a corporation to move into Ontario or out of Ontario. The north is shutting down because of the cost of electricity. Coming up, the electricity market in Ontario is going to have the HST applied to it. It's going to have time-of-day metering, which I'm told could increase costs of electricity up to 30%. That's probably the upper end, but that would be a huge increase. There's an 11% rate hike that has just been introduced on Ontario electricity.

The non-peak rate for electricity has also increased to the point where some people feel it is less of an incentive now than it should be. The cost of electricity in this province is going to skyrocket by double-digit increases of perhaps 20%, 25% over the next year or two, and that is going to cause further disruption with industry exiting Ontario to other places. We've seen it in the north, where electricity is a huge factor in mining and smelting and a huge factor in pulp and paper, and we're going to see it in the south in the second exodus.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a quick two minutes in response to the speech by the member from Trinity–Spadina, who began by talking about the fact that in his recent memory, he seems to feel we have begun to attack things on the backs of the poor. He began by saying it's the welfare cheats and those who cheat on employment insurance who we seem to be attacking. Well, I hope that if there are welfare cheats and employment insurance cheats, we are trying to find that money and ensure it stays within the system so that people who need Ontario disability support, Ontario Works and employment insurance have a little bit more resources left to draw upon.

He talks about his 15 or 20 years. I'll tell you that in my going on seven years here, one of the things I find very interesting is that nothing changes. At the end of the day, when you listen to the debate, it unfortunately comes around to the same thing all the time. In my seven years here, the Conservative position on a variety of issues hardly ever changes or even has some fine distinction to it, and the third party, the NDP's positions, as I listened to him speak on corporate income tax reductions, never changes either. The same thing: Any income tax reduction is bad; any corporate income tax reduction is bad—100% the same all the time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What's your position? What's the Liberal position?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, we're in the middle. That's the great thing about being a Liberal, my friend. And you see, he says the same thing all the time.

I've sat in the room in the last seven years with many corporations. I don't pretend I love them, but I do pretend that from time to time they do hold some cards and we need to respond to them. Unfortunately, it seems that the NDP never remembers that if we do keep them here, they

do provide jobs at the end of the day and they do help the people we all want to help.

So I'm sometimes dismayed by the fact that positions seem so entrenched after so long that there isn't—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened carefully to the eloquent words from the member for Trinity–Spadina, and I do hold him in a great deal of respect.

But let me tell you how the economy has changed. For most of the 1990s, the Canadian dollar was at 64 cents vis-à-vis the American dollar. Every product that we manufactured here in Ontario was going into other markets, because most of the other markets are priced in US dollars, at a 40% discount. That was a huge advantage for Ontarian and Canadian manufacturers.

He talks about a piece from Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of Canada. Let me tell you what Mark Carney has said—that for the foreseeable future, the Canadian dollar is going to be very close to parity with the United States dollar.

One of the reasons that we've tried to bring a reformed tax regime in the province of Ontario is if we're going to be dealing with a dollar at par, we need to have some other advantages to try to keep Ontario products competitive in the international markets. That's one of the reasons why we're bringing in a reformed tax structure.

He fails to talk about something I'm very proud of because one of the founding members spent his formative years in Peterborough: Jim Balsillie and Research in Motion. Jim and his partner, Mike Lazaridis, have a consistent track record of bringing innovation and creating new jobs in the province Ontario. That's a good example of a Canadian-based manufacturer that will take these tax cuts and pour them into innovation to make sure his particular product, which most members in this House use, stays ahead of the competition on a daily basis. There are these Ontario success stories.

In my own riding of Peterborough, Flying Colours is a company that refurbishes jets. They're using the tax breaks to expand their workforce. These are the kinds of examples that are out there. Not all of them are like that, but these are concrete examples of tax cuts to create—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Trinity–Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, the member from Peterborough makes mention of Research in Motion, and these are good examples of how the private sector, from time to time, comes up with a grand new idea. It was a great idea, and we support them. But we know that the private sector still lags behind in terms of investments in new equipment, technology and sophisticated training. We know this. There are some that do it, but for the most part, we lag behind.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We ought to know, and if the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan doesn't know, he

ought to know this. He says that he's been here for seven years and nothing changes. Good God. Do you see yourself changing in your position? When you talk about being in the middle, have you moved further to the left or further to the right? Where are you? Are you always in the middle, or are you closer to the right? In what way have you changed?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, let him speak. It's okay.

In what way have you changed? You have not changed one single bit except, these days, you're moving closer to the Mike Harris that you don't like.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Can we stop the clock for a minute? The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, you had your chance to comment. We'd now like to hear the response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Liberals haven't changed except that they move to the right when they need to, and they move to the left when they need to. These days, they're moving to the right, and that's not a change for Liberals; that's what they do.

The new reality, member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, is the following: Many employers are replacing full-time, permanent workers with short-term, temporary and contract workers who earn less and have less job security. That's the new reality. How are you making that new reality, Liberal member from somewhere in the north, different through the things you are doing? How are you making a difference? Speak to that, member from—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's sort of disheartening to see two of my fellow compatriots arguing, one from northern Ontario and one from southern Italy. It's too bad. But I think that's part of the necessary debate that goes on in this place, because budgets are differences of opinion, obviously, in terms of how you deal with these astronomical problems that we have.

The context of this budget is a budget in extraordinary times. I think we in Ontario and in Canada have been somewhat fortunate, considering the impact that this financial meltdown has had on the whole world. If you just look at what has happened to countries like Portugal, Greece—the United States of America is still reeling; massive unemployment.

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If you look at California, it's 12.6% unemployment in California. They're basically in total gridlock in California, and I'm not just talking about the highways. In California, because of the Proposition 13 mechanism, they're not allowed to raise taxes unless they have a local referendum. Obviously, nobody's going to raise taxes in the middle of a recession when they don't have a job, so they can't raise taxes; they can't borrow money because their credit rating is essentially at zero; and they are

forced to lay off people in California. They're laying off government workers, they're laying off university professors, teachers, because they don't have the resources through taxation, through borrowing or through an expanding economy through taxes that they would collect corporately or personally. They essentially can't raise those tax dollars to provide for the public. California, which is the seventh-largest economy in the western world—it's quite a huge economy; the size of Canada, basically—is gridlocked because they can't make any moves. They're frozen.

This is a state that has an incredible climate, incredible resources and incredible academic institutions. It has everything that you would think a province, state or country should have, but because of this situation that they've gone through in this economic meltdown, they're stuck. I'm just pointing that out because I think it demonstrates how difficult this has been not only for our government, but for the governments in Ottawa, in England—in every country.

Given those circumstances, I think what we've been able to achieve in this government is quite laudable. It's not perfect, as no budget is perfect, but it's quite laudable that despite the downturn—corporate profit, corporate taxation has gone down in Ontario, there's no doubt about it. Personal income tax has gone down and the need to provide for more social assistance has gone up. When people lost their jobs, we had to provide more funding for those in need, and we sometimes have to make up for rising needs—for instance, our Second Career program. We've never had such an extensive program in all the years that we've had a province, where essentially a person who goes back to school and gets retrained can get quite a sizable sum of money—I think up to about \$28,000 over two years—to retrain and, hopefully, find a job and pay for their rent, their expenses. We've had to find the money to do that, to basically deal with the ramifications of this economic meltdown. That's in the budget, which is a good thing.

The child care money that's in the budget I think is a very important investment, because there is no national child care program in Canada, sad to say, so we've had to invest provincial money into that. Certainly, it would be great if there could be even more, because one need that's not talked about enough in our province is the need to provide for good, professional child care for our children. The reality of this city, this province, is that parents, especially mothers, really cannot make do with the child care that exists today. They are driven from pillar to post. They're stressed out. Both partners have to work. They're up at 6 o'clock in morning. You can see them on the Dufferin bus, dragging their kids off to some child care centre.

It is very difficult on mothers, especially without proper child care. Therefore, in this budget, we've tried to address that. Again, as I said, I wish we had more to address that, because it is an incredibly stressful situation that exists in our society today. I really don't know how some mothers do it. I give them praise for doing what

they do with their children, considering how difficult it is.

The other thing which I think is very good for families and for people who are trying to get by by working, taking care of their children, is the all-day kindergarten. It's an incredibly good start, given the economy we're in, that we're starting this program—which, again, will not only help the children, the four- and five-year-olds, but it will help the parents by ensuring they will get this continuum of care in one setting, hopefully.

Again, I know that you can criticize that it's not a perfect program; it was just a start-up. We wish we could have done more, but the fact that we're doing as much as we are in this economy is another laudable part of this budget, given the challenge.

Those are two very tangible day-to-day things that I know that a lot of regular families in Ontario, certainly in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, do appreciate. It doesn't matter what political stripe you are, they like that and they want to see more of that. They think that when government does that, government is good. I think we've got to do more of that kind of thing, hopefully, in the future.

The other thing that's good in this budget is the continued investment in infrastructure. Infrastructure means building more roads, more transit, more schools, more retrofitting of buildings; they're greening a lot of the schools in Ontario with better boiler systems etc. These dollars that go into improving our schools, hospitals, roads and transit systems are good in that people who normally would not be working are now working in meaningful jobs, and at the same time, they're building better infrastructure, better schools and better hospitals that will be of benefit for us for decades to come. That commitment we've made to \$32 billion over two years, in co-operation with the federal government, is a very laudable thing in this budget which not enough people appreciate, given the economic meltdown that we've gone through.

That continues in this budget, and that's one of the reasons why the deficit is where it is. Everybody is obviously concerned about the level of the deficit, but again, it's a choice. You could have a lower deficit, less investment in infrastructure, less investment in child care, less investment in all-day kindergarten or less investment in health care or education in our elementary and high schools, but the choice is made that we don't want to be caught in that California conundrum there, where all of a

sudden, if you start reducing the amount of economic activity that's been generated by government, you basically end up having fewer people with disposable income. Therefore, the private sector also suffers because people don't buy television sets—not that I'm advocating people to buy television sets; in fact, I think we have too many TVs in this country. We don't need five televisions per home. I hope the pages here only have one TV in their home. That's all you really need; you don't need five or six. The member from Trinity–Spadina only has one little black-and-white one in his basement; I know that and I applaud him for that. He watches the soccer games on Sunday and that's all he needs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Soccer? World Cup.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, the World Cup coming in South Africa—right.

Just in terms of the health care constraint in this budget, the beginning of the control of some of our health care costs I think is something that the public is very supportive of, because it's just totally out of control. I don't really blame the Big Pharma; I don't blame them. I think our whole society is too connected to drugs. We rely so much on drugs. Our heads hurt, our backs hurt; drugs on TV for everything, drugs wherever you go—drugstores everywhere. I think we have more drug stores in Canada than anywhere else the world. We've got more drugstores than corner stores. I don't know how that's possible.

Let's get away from reliance on drugs and let's invest more money, as this budget does, on preventive approaches: fitness, walking, running, playing soccer and eating less, which we all have to do. We eat too much in this country, and that's the tragedy—that there are so many people who don't have enough to eat, then there are so many people who eat too much. Maybe those of us who eat too much should put some of our money aside and help provide food for those who don't have enough to eat.

Then you go to the bookstore: They're selling books on diets and then books on cooking, all beside each other. So you go to a diet—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being almost 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|--|---|
| Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB) | Hamilton Mountain | Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs |
| Albanese, Laura (LIB) | York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston | |
| Arnott, Ted (PC) | Wellington–Halton Hills | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Arthurs, Wayne (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia–Lambton | |
| Balkissoon, Bas (LIB) | Scarborough–Rouge River | |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand–Norfolk | |
| Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB) | Sudbury | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels |
| Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB) | London West / London-Ouest | Attorney General / Procureur général 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) Elliott, Christine (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB) | Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville | Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Nickel Belt 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) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Kenora–Rainy River 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) Hudak, Tim (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex 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) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud Trinity–Spadina Cambridge | Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
| Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) 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) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan 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) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans 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) Miller, Paul (NDP) | Parry Sound–Muskoka 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 | |

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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

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Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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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**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
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
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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
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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 Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, 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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