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Tuesday 7 December 2010

Mardi 7 décembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: quorum?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Clerk will see if there is a quorum present.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW
AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ
DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The pension issue is coming to a head with a vote shortly. It's not a new issue in this House—it's not a new one for any of us—and it has implications more than ever now on a variety of levels for people across the province, for people, indeed, across our entire country. There are a variety of solutions that are being proposed, but there's nothing simple. This bill, taken on its own, doesn't solve the problem. It addresses a piece of the problem, and this is a problem that is unfolding before us.

If you take a good look at me—and I'll look right at that television camera so the folks at home can participate—you can see by my boyish good looks that I'm not a day over 55. That's what it looks like, but it's not true. I am; I'm past Freedom 55. As I have stated in this House before—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I know you're surprised—I'm without any defined benefit pension plan. I have no defined benefit pension plan. I'm not whining about it. It's a fact of life for people in this House; it's a fact of life for 70% of people in Ontario, for whom there is no defined benefit pension plan. I share this more as a fact than from some elevated position or as somebody who believes that he is somehow or other entitled, because I'm not any more entitled than the other 70% of people who have to fend for themselves going forward.

The other very important fact that has to be seriously considered is that we're all living longer. I just said that I've passed 55. I'm 63 years old. My first memories of my maternal grandmother, who was the only grandparent I ever met, were when I was five and she was 63. She was a little, old, hobbled lady, with those funny shoes—63 was very old. Today, I'm not very old, and I expect to live another 20 years and, if I'm lucky—or unlucky, depending on how it works—maybe 30.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't you say it; I know what you're thinking.

We're living longer, definitely, but are we saving? Are we saving for that greater longevity? The answer is that most people are not. They are not for a variety of reasons, not least because it's almost impossible to save. First of all, we grew up in a culture where we needed instant gratification, so people spend their money more or less from hand to mouth. And now we live in a culture where a lot of us don't have that opportunity anymore to buy the things that we want; we're just spending it on things we need and we're exhausting it. This is a national problem; it's also a provincial problem and it is an individual problem. We are living to 80, to 90, and most people have not had the foresight to think, "I am going to live longer, so I'm going to have to save." It's my belief and it is our party's belief that ultimately the answer to this lies within the private sector, not the public sector. We all know that the private sector has the vision and the creativity to accomplish what government will not. We could always come up with an easy way out. The example would be, "We'll just double the benefits of the Canada pension plan." A lot of people say, "Why can't we do that? It's the government's money." There's no such thing as government money. The government's money is your money, it's my money, it's all of our money, and it doesn't come off a printing press because we happen to think maybe it's a good idea to double Canada pension plan benefits.

If we were to do something like that—that money comes from you; it comes from taxpayers. And if it's not you who are the direct beneficiary of a doubling of the Canada pension plan, then it's you who are paying increased taxes that you certainly cannot afford to make sure that those of us who are going to form the largest cohort age-wise in the province—as of 2017, more people will be over 65 than any other cohort. We don't have the tax base that can afford to pay us the kind of money that would be required to double the Canada pension plan. It sounds easy, but it isn't. And we're forgetting an important question: Where is this money going to come from?

I'm getting the time sign here from my friend, but I have some more to say.

Speaking of the private sector, I must speak to the growing disconnect between the private sector and the public sector as it relates to pensions, specifically with the Ontario teachers' pension plan. There is a line item in this year's budget where there was a \$500-million contribution from general tax revenues to sustain the fund. Let's face it: Most businesses are not able to participate or even operate in this way. Once upon a time in my own life, and probably, I venture, in the lives of most people here who have ever worked in a corporate environment, a defined benefit pension plan was part and parcel of what you did. When I was 18 or 19 and had just gotten out of university, I went to work for a company, now defunct, called Standard Broadcasting. It was a big company controlled by the Argus Corp., which became Hollinger, and—I say this by way of point of interest—the fellow at the top was a guy named Conrad Black; you may have heard of him, a guest of the US government for a little while. He was my boss, not then but ultimately. The first thing I had to do was fill out an employee card and sign my defined benefit pension plan card. When I was unceremoniously bid adieu from that company some years later, they handed me a great big cheque that was the proceeds of my pension fund to date, but I couldn't cash it. That was a good thing. It went into a pension fund which forms part of what I've saved over the course of my life. Fortunately, I've had some foresight. I don't know if I've had enough foresight to not be able to work at this point. Most people don't; I've mentioned that. My point being that that was then and this is now. We don't sign defined benefit pension cards anymore unless we're members of the public sector. The public sector is the new elite; 30% of the population has pension benefits that are in defined plans, and most of those people work in the public sector.

Some small businesses may have a defined contribution plan, similar to what we have here at Queen's Park. That's a plan where the business contributes an amount towards an RRSP and the employee gets to match it. We know that the private sector world is moving in that direction, but this is not the case for the public sector. People in the public sector can retire with various factors in their mid-50s. I've mentioned that I'm in my 60s; many people here are. Some of us work here—I would

say that I do—because we like the idea of public service. Some of us still work here because we have to. And that's the case across the board in the world of business.

I have a lot more to say, but I have a couple of colleagues who also want to speak. So I'm going to withdraw from the debate at this point and simply say that this bill does not make any provisions for the 60% to 70% of Ontarians without any pension. It simply addresses people who have pensions now. So as usual, the government has forgotten to take into consideration most Ontario taxpayers in this bill. Going forward, we have to make provisions for more pension benefits for everybody out there, and that will be a function of the private sector.

0910

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to speak to this on third reading. Of course, the government, with its heavy fist, in its typical ham-fisted manner, marched in the jackboots and imposed time allocation on this legislation, notwithstanding that it's an important issue for a whole lot of Ontarians.

It's interesting to follow the member for Thornhill, because I take his comments very seriously. The reality is that people in this chamber do not have a defined benefit pension because they voted it away in 1996. It was a unanimous vote by all three parties. There wasn't a single member who stood up and voted against the Harris proposition, because it seemed politically attractive at the time. At the end of the day, I don't think it earned anybody a single vote or lost anybody a single vote, but that's what happens when you have knee-jerk policy decisions like that one of Mr. Harris's.

But we do have a defined contribution pension plan. Most of the folks in this province have no pension plan whatsoever—none. They have eligibility for old age security when they reach 65. If they worked, they have eligibility for the Canada pension plan, but even this discussion around CPP is a little bit of a red herring, because a whole lot of folks don't have CPP.

Who are these people? A whole lot of new Canadians who arrive in this country in their 30s or 40s and who only start working in Canada then, acquiring CPP credits, if you will. A whole lot of those people are underemployed, because many of them are well-trained professionals who aren't working at the professional level that they should be, something in which the province of Ontario has failed new Canadians miserably. Others are in low-wage jobs. I think of staff at hotels. As you know, there's an organizing bid and an ongoing struggle with hotel cleaning staff. The union here is active in advocating for these people. A whole lot of them are new Canadian people. A whole lot of them are women, working very, very hard for very low wages. Here they are: They've got the double, triple whammy of starting work in Canada at a later age than most, earning low wages and doing the kind of work—the government eliminated the mandatory retirement age. A lot of help that does a cleaning person in a hotel who is flipping mattresses a

dozen times a day as well as cleaning other people's toilets and bathtubs. That's hard physical work, and the reality is that you see very few 70- or 75-year-old cleaning staff in hotels. That's the reality of it. Here we have this other group of people who have CPP but their CPP amounts to a pittance.

Then, again, although it's changing now, we've had historically the issue of women. In the 1950s, when I grew up, women worked but nowhere near as often as they do now. Women then tended to stay home and work very hard. It's not that they didn't work. They worked very, very hard, maintaining their households, caring for their children, taking care of a husband, perhaps taking care of a senior parent—all unpaid work, so not a penny of contribution to the Canada pension plan. We have a huge number of women in their mature years, in their senior years, who have no CPP eligibility, notwithstanding that they've worked hard all of their lives. They might have some modest survivor benefits; if they were single moms, they got nothing. The 65-year eligibility for old age security is not much of a milestone because it's a very, very modest amount.

In fact, in all of our constituency offices we talk to folks in their senior years who are living on less than \$12,000, less than \$10,000 a year. That's a tragedy, because it's not as if these people were in any way lazy or slothful or indifferent as to whether or not they had a job or an income, or living off the proceeds of crime. These were hard-working people, women and men, who had the misfortune of being in careers or jobs, doing work, where one had no CPP eligibility. Again, CPP is better than a kick in the head, but the amount that one receives on CPP even at the maximum level is hardly sufficient in the view of the vast majority of people to enable one to live with any level of decency or dignity.

Now we have fewer and fewer workers who are working because we have fewer and fewer workers who are in unionized jobs. This government, the McGuinty government, scuttled at least 300,000 or more jobs—gone. These were the good jobs, these were the manufacturing jobs, these are the wealth-creating jobs, these were the value-added jobs; and they tended to be unionized jobs, like—and I'll say it again—the 900 workers down at John Deere in Welland. John Deere had been there a hundred years: unionized shops, CAW—Canadian Auto Workers. A very skilled workforce: Men and women who worked very, very hard and produced some great product, but their jobs are gone. And many of them have replaced those jobs with jobs that are non-union, jobs with much lower wages, jobs without any pension plan whatsoever; or they're in contract work where they're effectively self-employed.

I suppose if one's making \$110,000 or \$150,000—what do people make here, \$120,000 a year or more?—it's easy to talk about saving money for retirement when you're making that kind of income. But when your family is living on \$25,000 a year—and there are a whole lot of families living on \$25,000 a year and less here in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—it's not so easy to talk about saving money.

An RRSP means very little to a family that's supporting itself on \$25,000 or \$30,000, or less. If you've got two or three kids, that money is gone like that; that money is gone in a New York minute. The tax-free savings account is being touted in the economic pages as a real bargain. That's the one where the feds will let you put \$5,000 a year into a savings account or, as I understand it, any other similar investment and let you earn the income tax-free. Well, I'm sorry, if you're eking by on \$20,000 \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000 or even \$40,000 a year, the prospect of putting \$5,000 a year of after-tax money into a savings account so you can earn a 1%-a-year interest rate isn't a reality. It's not an option; it's not a choice.

We've got folks down at Atlas Steel—there are still workers who are ex-workers of Atlas Steel—who were ripped off as a result of a grossly underfunded pension plan and because the pension benefits guarantee fund remains capped at \$1,000 a month of pension replacement. These workers, these former workers, who otherwise would have had pensions of, I don't know, \$2,000, \$2,500, \$3,000 a month—again, not a whole lot of money—are reduced to \$1,000 a month. There's no Nortel buyout for them. There's no GM buyout or Stelco pension fund buyout for them. These Atlas Steel workers got left out there, twisting in the wind. They got hung and dried.

0920

I suppose what's most disappointing about this legislation—and New Democrats are going to support it, again, because it's better than a kick in the head, but not much—is the failure of this government to respond to the Arthurs recommendation that the pension benefits guarantee fund be set at a cap of \$2,500 a month. It's the most modest of proposals. It protects hard-working women and men from the voracious profit appetites of corporations—increasingly multinational corporations—that would rather skim off the top than adequately fund a pension plan.

And what's remarkable—if the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller, were here, he'd be inclined to tell you about the scenario in Stelco, where the fat cats, the top guys, got buyouts of six-digit and perhaps seven-digit figures. It's like the old adage: The bosses get the mine and the workers get the shaft, huh? And they got the shaft. People expect their government to come to their assistance, to come to their aid, to support them in scenarios like this.

New Democrats feel that the government has a responsibility to ensure that there's a legislative regime that supports adequate pensions for all workers. That's why the New Democrats—Andrea Horwath and the NDP—have advocated for an Ontario pension fund, one which would have all workers, regardless of the size of their workplace—because it's understandable. It's very difficult for an employer in a two- or three-person workplace. It's very expensive for that employer and those workers to participate in a pension fund. But if you had an Ontario-wide pension fund, sponsored provincially so that

all workers and all employers could participate, even the smallest workforce could participate in it—even a one- or two-person workforce; even the family-run, mom-and-pop business could participate in it. What a novel idea.

It has already been noted that people are living longer. It has already been noted over the course of the last weeks and months that this province is making life more expensive. Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians say that it's harder to get by now than it was two years ago. And in response to that, what does the Premier of this province do? What does Premier McGuinty do? He tells Ontarians, he promises them, that they're going to enjoy at least a 46% increase in their electricity rates over the next five years. And that's on top of the tax-grab HST created by Mr. McGuinty and his government; that's on top of so-called not-so-smart, stupid, dumber-and-dumber meters that are jacking up hydro rates for almost every hydro user, electricity user, here in the province of Ontario.

Folks haven't seen nothing yet, because we're just starting to get into the cold season. That furnace motor's going to be running hours a day, and the colder it gets, the longer it's going to be running. If people have had their socks knocked off by hydro rates so far, just wait until January and February coming. Our constituency offices are going to be flooded—as if they haven't been already—flooded with people whose singular comment is going to be, “I simply can't afford to pay it. The well is dry, and I can't not heat my house. The well is dry.” So Premier McGuinty and the Liberals have made life more expensive for Ontarians and have effectively promised to make it even more expensive over the years to come. Yet they implicitly, in their failure to address the real pension issue in the province of Ontario, are telling people, “Well, if you want to survive through your senior years, save your money.”

It's easy, once again, for a member of this Legislature making well into a six-digit income to talk about saving your money. For the life of me, I can't think of how you can tell that mom working at the 7-Eleven, on her feet all day, raising her three kids on a wage that's barely above minimum wage—and Lord knows, I don't know how she does it. She does it with a whole lot of sacrifice. She does it by doing without so that her kids don't have to, and even the kids do without. These are the kids who don't take money to pizza day at their elementary school. These are the kids who can't afford to participate in extracurriculars, sports programs, athletic programs. These are the kids who don't get to go to dance lessons or piano lessons or guitar lessons. These are the kids who don't get to go to a summer camp for a mere week, or maybe two.

How does that woman save for her retirement? She doesn't. She's probably too busy right now, that single mom raising three kids, working at a 7-Eleven. Or maybe working one of the hotels in Niagara Falls, as I said before, cleaning rooms—honourable work, but darned hard work, you better believe it, and not very well-paying, not well-paying at all—and abusive work. Or maybe she's working in the service industry, oh, the much-

touted tourism industry. Maybe she's a server, a waitress, dare I say it, who's having her tips ripped off by a boss because this government won't pass the legislation proposed by the member for Beaches—East York, Michael Prue, that would forbid restaurant bosses and bar bosses from stealing their servers', their waiters', their waitresses', their bartenders' tips. Maybe she cleans other people's houses. Maybe she works hard and is trusted and respected by people who can afford the proverbial cleaning lady. She doesn't have a pension plan. She doesn't have a defined benefit pension plan, she doesn't have a defined contribution pension plan and she sure as heck doesn't have any savings.

So while this legislation provides some modest tinkering, some of which has been sought by the labour movement, it in no way, shape or form addresses the crisis around retirees, seniors and poverty, the crisis around the decline of unionized jobs, the crisis around the movement to eliminate defined benefit pension plans. And increasingly, we're going to see in workplaces dual systems: Long-standing workers will have defined benefit pension plans; new hires will be forced into a defined contribution pension plan, which, again, is not much of a pension plan at all. There's no guarantee of any result, and you're subject to the vagaries of the stock market. Lord knows; look what the last two years have done to a whole lot of people's savings, including modest mutual fund holders.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Applause.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to stand in the House today for third reading of Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. Of course, I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for that warm welcome this morning. Thank you, Minister.

This act is just one part of our government's comprehensive plan. It's a plan to improve Ontario's retirement income system, to strengthen employment pension plans and to do this through both modernization and innovation. Our government has been very active on this file in the past few years, and we're taking significant steps in order to make retirement easier for the people of Ontario.

We continue to work with our federal, provincial and territorial partners to make significant improvements to Canada's retirement income system. Thanks to urging by Premier McGuinty, the Council of the Federation endorsed the idea of a national summit on Canada's retirement income system. The federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers are now developing options for reform and are going to discuss these options at the upcoming finance ministers' meeting of December 19 and 20. As you're aware, we're calling for a modest, fully funded, phased-in expansion to the Canada pension plan, along with tax and regulatory changes, in order to expand the range of institutions that can act as pension plan administrators, and to extend the plan coverage to a broader range of people, which would include, of course, the self-employed.

Such changes could also help lower the cost of providing defined contribution plans. To further this goal, we recently released a discussion paper called *Securing Our Retirement Future: Consulting with Ontarians on Canada's Retirement Income System*. It outlines the challenges facing Ontarians and, of course, all Canadians who are seeking a stable, secure retirement income, and the options that are available to them. Through this discussion paper, we're soliciting even more input from the people of Ontario on reforming the pension and retirement income system.

Furthermore, in May of this year, the House unanimously passed Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. It built upon the recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions and upon extensive consultations with stakeholders that will help the pension system adapt to the economic changes while, at the same time, balancing the need for benefit security.

The government has been clear from the outset that Bill 236 was the first part of a multi-step process to update and to improve the employment pension system. This is a point we reiterated in the 2010 budget, and we committed to introducing further pension reforms. So Bill 120, the *Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010*, is the continuation of this process.

This proposed legislation builds on the principles of the 2010 budget and recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions. It also reflects consultations with stakeholders, discussions with members of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and, of course, input that was provided from the Advisory Council on Pensions and Retirement Income.

A number of the proposed reforms would be phased in so that plan sponsors, administrators and other stakeholders would have time to adjust. Regulatory amendments would be required to implement many of the proposed changes to the Pension Benefits Act.

As you know, the McGuinty government is committed to maintaining an open and transparent process. Therefore, any draft regulations developed would be posted on the regulatory registry for review by stakeholders.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight what proposed reforms in the *Securing Pensions Now and for the Future Act* would accomplish. If passed, and once required regulations are drafted, consulted on and implemented, the legislation would lay the groundwork for modernizing funding rules, including strengthening required contributions. Strengthening funding rules would ensure plans are better positioned to withstand market risks.

The bill also provides for an improved framework for contribution holidays. If an ongoing plan is in surplus, with more assets than liabilities, excess assets may be used to offset contributions for the current service costs of funding ongoing pension accruals. When a plan is using surplus to reduce or suspend such contributions, it's taking what we call a contribution holiday.

Current rules do not require disclosure when a contribution holiday is under way. The commission stated that

information about contribution holidays is essential for an understanding of plan funding, both for the regulator and for all plan participants. That's why we're proposing to expressly permit contribution holidays, unless prohibited by the plan document, only if they do not reduce the plan's transfer ratio below a prescribed level.

The bill would also accelerate the funding of benefit improvements. In its report, the Expert Commission on Pensions noted that current rules permit benefit improvements to be funded over 15 years. It suggested instead that they should be fully identified and funded not just fully, but promptly. To improve benefit security, the government has proposed that benefit improvements be funded over no more than eight years on an ongoing concern basis.

Bill 120 would also clarify surplus entitlement. In its report, the commission observed that employers, active members and retirees have been engaged in conflicts over surplus use and distribution since at least the mid-1980s. Reform is needed to address long-standing debates about surplus entitlement and the costly litigation that often results.

To address surplus entitlement issues, the government is proposing to provide more legal certainty and a binding arbitration process for surplus distribution on plan windup, while continuing to allow payment to an employer where there is entitlement or a surplus-sharing agreement. The government is also proposing to allow payment of surplus from an ongoing plan to an employer where there is entitlement or consent, provided the remaining surplus is no less than the greater of 25% of windup liabilities and twice the current service costs plus 5% of windup liabilities.

Finally, to address surplus entitlement issues, we are proposing to ensure surplus rights are protected after asset transfers related to plan splits or mergers by requiring surplus-sharing agreements if the plan terms differ, if and when a successor plan is wound up. Of course, details would be set out in regulation.

We're also proposing to modify funding requirements for the multi-employer pension plan or MEPP and the jointly sponsored pension plans or the JSPPs that meet specific criteria. The commission had this to say: "MEPPs and JSPPs should be allowed more flexibility in funding," and they cited joint governance, risk sharing, the ability to reduce benefits and the absence of pension benefits guarantee fund coverage as legitimate reasons for different funding rules.

Acknowledging these distinctions, this bill proposes to provide a framework for MEPPs that offers target benefits. They would be exempt from solvency funding requirements, provided certain criteria are met, including an unrestricted ability to reduce accrued benefits in their plans.

Also, it proposes to allow target benefit plans that are exempt from solvency funding requirements to reduce benefit levels to the greater of the transfer ratio or going concern ratio when individual members choose to transfer the commuted value of their pension benefits out of

an underfunded plan. This would, of course, also require amendments to the regulations.

0940

As you know, this government has been working hard to make the pension benefits guarantee fund, or the PBGF, more sustainable. Since 1980, Ontario's PBGF has provided pensioners and plan members with a degree of benefit protection when plans are wound up with insufficient funds to cover promised benefits. Generally, the fund provides a maximum benefit top-up of up to \$1,000 per month.

The commission recommended that the PBGF be self-financing. Current PBGF assessments are as low as \$1 per plan member per year, with no minimum assessment per pension plan. So to place the PBGF on a more sustainable financial footing, we're proposing a strategy that recognizes the need for participation by all stakeholders. This strategy would increase the PBGF revenue by making assessments more consistent for the covered plans with, of course, similar funding levels and raising assessment levels by making changes to regulations. The strategy would implement stronger funding rules to reduce the risk and size of pension deficits in covered pension plans.

The Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, also proposes to further modernize the pension system in Ontario, as recommended in the commission's report. If passed, the bill would provide more flexibility. It would provide opportunities for plan innovation by allowing employers to use irrevocable letters of credit from a financial institution to cover a portion of solvency special payments; allowing payment of variable benefits from defined contribution plans; and allowing flexible defined benefit pension plans, as permitted by the federal Income Tax Act.

It would strengthen regulatory oversight as well, by granting the superintendent the power to appoint a new administrator in certain circumstances.

It would improve plan administration by allowing reasonable expenses to be paid from the pension fund, unless prohibited by the plan documents.

Finally, we recognize that the absence of pension reform in Ontario for decades was unacceptable. This bill therefore includes a proposal that the Minister of Finance be required to initiate a review of the Pension Benefits Act every five years, and this is essential for the well-being of Ontario's retirees and those who are working towards retirement.

We've undertaken exhaustive public consultations in crafting this bill. The Minister of Finance conducted a series of round-table discussions on pension reform. On August 26, we posted the draft of this bill on our website and invited stakeholders and the public to provide feedback. We also received feedback at committee hearings.

It's feedback from people like Ian McSweeney, a partner with Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt, who had this to say: "The Ontario government, in my view, is to be commended for its significant efforts to put forward much-needed pension reform in a number of areas in the 2008

Arthurs report; one which intended to promote the objectives in that report, which included better securing pensions to deliver the pension promise, clarifying surplus rules, improving plan administration, reducing compliance costs and strengthening regulatory oversight."

We also received feedback from people like Derek Dobson, who is the CEO and plan manager of the pension plan for the college system in Ontario, also known as the CAAT pension plan. Mr. Dobson had this to say: "The changes proposed in Bill 120 align with the focus of our pension plan...: long-term sustainability; appropriate contributions for benefits being earned; minimizing contribution rate volatility; ...intergenerational equity ... open communication and disclosure."

Finally, I'd like to conclude with the thoughts of Betty Ann Bushell. She's treasurer of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada. In committee hearings, we heard Ms. Bushell state—she had this to say to us in committee: "This is a legacy issue. It's up to this Legislature to leave the people of Ontario in a much better position in terms of their retirement and pensions than they are now, and I would urge you to do it well and do it with long-term thoughts in your minds."

If passed, Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, would do just that, and of course that's why I'm asking for the full support of the House to pass Bill 120.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes on third reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. I know that the member from Durham also is keen to speak to this bill—it's an area that he's quite interested in—so I will be fairly brief.

The parliamentary assistant went over quite a few of the details of the bill. We are supporting the bill. It's mainly to do with defined benefit pension plans, as she pointed out in her speech, some relatively minor changes.

The member from Thornhill pointed out that there is still 60% or 70% of people out there who are not saving enough for their retirement income, and that's a big problem that does still need to be dealt with, either at the national level—most preferably at the national level.

I would like to just briefly talk about this bill in terms of the process, the fact that we did propose some amendments. Unfortunately, we wonder why we do them, as the opposition, at times because our track record of getting any of them passed doesn't seem to be very good. But we did listen to those groups that came before the committee at committee hearings and proposed some amendments.

One in particular was to do with target benefits. There was an excellent presentation from Buck Consultants, wanting to expand the ability of different groups to be able to participate in target benefit pension plans. So we in fact moved an amendment that would—the exact amendment was, "I move that paragraph 2 of subsection 39.2(1) of the Pension Benefits Act, as set out in

subsection 12(1) of the bill, be amended by striking out 'one or more collective agreements' at the end and substituting 'collective agreements or other prescribed agreements.'" The purpose of that was to expand the target benefit plans to not just unionized groups but any group out there that wanted to form a prescribed agreement.

The Buck presentation talked about how defined benefit plans aren't working for most private sector employees. The future liability of them is—the reality is, private sector employees are—fewer and fewer are providing defined benefit plans, especially for new hires. Defined contribution plans aren't working for most employees. A defined contribution plan is what members of the Ontario Legislature in fact have, where they contribute a portion of their income each month, where it's a defined contribution plan which is invested in RRSPs.

The new sort of idea that's come out is target benefit plans. They're a solution to increase pension plan coverage to Ontario workers. That's why we proposed an amendment that would expand who could participate in target benefit plans, as was recommended by the presentation done by Buck Consultants at committee. Unfortunately, the government voted that amendment down.

We also proposed an amendment to provide more timely information for the plan users. The Canadian Federation of Pensioners, who are hundreds of thousands of people across the province, pointed out that if things go bad in their pension plan, the current requirement is a three-year valuation, and there are six months to do it, so it can be almost four years by the time they find out the bad news, like the 2008 bad news, for example.

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They were asking, as many other pension plans do have now, with modern technology and electronic means of doing these things, for an annual valuation. We did propose an amendment to do with that, to bring more timely information to those retired plan members; that was also voted down by the government.

We also proposed, as recommended by one of the presenters, that the too-big-to-fail rules be struck out so that the rules would apply to all companies in the same way and so we would not have special exemptions and holidays on contributions by the large companies, because it has been proven in recent history that it doesn't matter how big the company is, whether it's General Motors or Stelco, they can all get in trouble, so there shouldn't be special rules for the large companies.

I just wanted to get those amendments that we proposed on the record. I just note that we will be supporting Bill 120 when it comes to a vote. Thank you very much for the time to speak.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to speak again on Bill 120 and to follow our critic Mr. Miller, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I thank him for allowing me such an inordinate amount of time.

The key here is that pensions continue to be an important part of, I would say, the social security plan of all

Canadians and all Ontarians. In fact, the whole issue of pensions has broad implications for not just Ontario. In fact, the expert panel that met prior to Bill 236, the first act, was an admission that pension plans, generally, were in serious trouble.

When you look at it, a lot of the attention being brought to this is at the federal level as well. I commend Minister Flaherty for convening a meeting last winter around this time—in Whitehorse, I think—and also for the current discussions that are going on federally. In fact, some of the discussions that are going on are about looking at the CPP, the Canada pension plan, and trying to fix the system for all people, because I think the most important place to start here, not just on Bill 120, is to realize that about 70% of the people living in Ontario, probably in Canada, don't have a pension except for the Canada pension and OAS plan, and that's quite frightening.

If you look, also, widely, most people don't take advantage of the RRSP, the registered retirement savings plan, which is a tax shelter, if you will, for ordinary Canadians. Also, there's another part of savings, which is saving for your children's education: the educational savings plan.

There was an article the other day about people not wanting to save. I can attest that even in my own family, my own children—all well employed—don't like to save. Saving for the future seems to be something that they did long ago, and it seems to have run out of style. Now, one doesn't wonder too long why, because the way the monetary system globally is now, you'd wonder what you should be saving in: dollars or gold? You look at gold reaching an all-time high. There's uncertainty in the whole equation here.

Governments are trying to settle that discussion down, trying to allay suspicions that there is a monetary crisis. In fact, there is. Today, China upped their interest rate, which is one of the monetary policies that any government has—to manipulate money supply through interest or supply of currency itself. The United States is resolved to this, and Bernanke—I heard him speak last week on a cable show. He was saying that they're going to expand the supply of money again by another \$600 billion, which really deflates the currency that's in circulation.

What would a person say then? If you're saving in dollars, would you not want to save in a currency that's going to be growing as opposed to shrinking? I'm not sure I would want my currency saved in euros, given what's going on in Europe.

It is tied to some very complex things. I've read quite a bit. I understand some of what I read, but it's a complicated topic. I always looked at it from my constituents' perspective. What are the three criteria that you look at when you look at pensions? And the actuaries themselves have a kind of formula that looks at pensions. It's a pot of money that people have set aside. It's invested generally quite securely and conservatively. That pot of money has got some rules around it. Usually, it's based on your entitlements or based on a couple of factors—return on equity, which is usually in the range of 5% to 7%. Really,

that isn't happening today. It also is ranged on the type of organizations you work for—the portability. When you look at General Motors, Nortel, Stelco, all of those legacy companies are basically bankrupt because of pension liabilities.

The third thing they look at is the number of people paying into a plan. Often, companies are outsourcing, downsizing, globalizing, and there's no security in terms of the organization themselves.

So, plans and who underwrites them when these companies fall off the cliff—we found out in the case of General Motors, the government itself at all levels, US and Canadian and provincial governments, had to come in and fix things up.

It does raise the question, are the rules strong enough? If you look at the current finance bill that's before us, which will be debated this afternoon, Bill 135 has some language in there that deals with the issue of derivatives and other forms of saving and investing. The reason I bring this up is this bill, which we support, does go a long way to recognizing some of the commitments made by the expert panel. You would know that that basically happened some time ago. The expert panel was pre-Bill 236. It was the first bill that came into effect, and I think it was in May 2010. This bill, Bill 120, came into effect on October 19 in first reading, second reading on the 4th, and now we're into the third and final reading and it's sort of time-allocated.

I thank and compliment the parliamentary assistant. She has worked tirelessly on this attempt to understand this complex issue.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga did remark on some of the things that Bill 120 does. That bill actually does a couple of things, and one of them I'm concerned about is this whole idea of contribution holidays. That's quite controversial, because contribution holidays are a case where the plan exceeds a certain amount of actuarial value. That's risk and reward analysis. I don't think there should be a contribution holiday. That's my own belief.

So there are sections in this bill that I think the experts have clearly commented on. I have an article here from Benefits Canada, and I have another article here that was passed on to me by the pension benefit law—Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. It was referred to by several people. I've read their papers well.

Anyway, it's a bill that we support and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Further debate? Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2010, on the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning, and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

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

There being no further debate, on September 28, 2010, Mr. Hoskins moved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote shall be deferred until deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1001 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a privilege for me to introduce two individuals in the Speaker's gallery this morning: Mrs. Alma Fell, who is the grandmother of our page from Peterborough, Jake Fell, and Mrs. Fell's very good family friend, Ms. Mae Goodwyn.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I ask all members to join me in welcoming the staff, students and volunteers from Walter E. Harris in Oshawa.

Mr. David Caplan: It's a real pleasure to have the family of page Miguel Agudelo here today: his mother, Lucia Henao, and his father, Miguel Agudelo. Welcome to Queen's Park on behalf of the Legislature.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like, at this time, to welcome a couple of visitors from my riding, Les Armstrong

and George Fortin, attending from the riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to welcome to the Legislature—they are not here yet, but they are coming—Aubrey and Debra Zidenberg.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning, I'd like to welcome some guests of mine: Brent Davis, Sam Davis, Lucy Gouveia and Kyle Gouveia, and from my constituency office, Veronika Sonier, Megan Trotter, Craig Bradford and Kim Davis, and Kim's grandson and my good friend, Kristian Young. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Families don't need the Provincial Auditor to tell them there is something wrong with their property assessments. Under Premier McGuinty, all they had to do was simply open up the bill. But now, the auditor confirmed exactly what Ontario families have known instinctively: that up to one in eight could be paying more than 20% too much in their property taxes.

I ask the minister, is Premier McGuinty simply too tired to fix MPAC? Or is he resisting change because he likes to rake in all of that extra money from overvalued property assessments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, we welcome the Auditor General's report and the recommendations he has made with respect to MPAC.

I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that MPAC is actually controlled by municipalities. I've had a chance to chat with the new chair of MPAC, who is the mayor of Stratford—an outstanding mayor, I might add. MPAC has already acted on the recommendations in many instances.

Again, just so that there's a complete understanding, the auditor also pointed out that as a result of these discrepancies, many people paid less. This is an ongoing challenge with assessment, and we look forward to the board of MPAC addressing the specific recommendations of the Auditor General.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That is cold comfort, Minister, to the people who are paying up to 20% more for their property assessments because you just can't get your act right. Now the minister wants to blame municipalities.

Minister, this falls on your desk. You are the Minister of Finance, and you know the Ombudsman raised similar concerns four years ago. In March 2006, the Ombudsman said, "MPAC is not concerned enough about problems it has encountered in ensuring the accuracy of its information." I asked you directly four years ago and you said you would fix the problem. You said MPAC has already responded. You said, "We're moving forward,"

and you said you were happy to have the Ombudsman's report—the exact same answers you just gave me here today.

Minister, are you asleep on the job? Or are you just using four-year-old talking points and not getting to the bottom of the problem?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd rather let the Ombudsman answer the leader's question. The leader is right: In his 2006 report there were a number of recommendations. According to the Ombudsman in his 2009-10 report, "All ... recommendations have now been implemented."

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario families know that the McGuinty government has become awfully tired in office. They keep seeing the same scandals come back over and over again.

Four years ago, you were warned of problems at MPAC, and then you went to sleep on the job.

But this isn't the only circumstance. The minister knows that his smart meters are badly broken, but you force them on families anyway. Fraudsters are driving up the cost of auto insurance, but you raise rates instead of cracking down on the cheaters.

To add insult to injury, you move the dream of home ownership farther away from middle-class families by slapping down your HST on new homes and renovations. Now we see property assessments 20% or more too high, but you won't fix them, and you're going to pocket the difference.

Why is it you see Ontario families as nothing more than cash machines for Dalton McGuinty's runaway spending?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the honourable member about the use of names. We use titles, ministries or ridings.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The other thing the Ombudsman pointed out in his 2009-10 report is that there had been a 90% decrease in the complaints, resultant from the changes we made.

The MPAC board is already in the process of responding to the auditor's recommendations. We will continue to work with him.

But I have to say, the only thing in this House that's broken is that leader's leadership. We don't know if it's the Lanark landowners who are asking questions or if it's the old red Tory wing of the party. We've been waiting for an energy plan from that party. They haven't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Speaker Claus has started his list; there's three on it already.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've been waiting for an energy plan from them, and we haven't gotten one. Now we know why: They're too busy fighting one another over who's in charge.

We've laid out a plan for a better energy future. We will respond to the Ombudsman's recommendations on MPAC and build a stronger province as a result of it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Finance: Minister, moms and dads in Ontario today are struggling to make ends meet. You've hit them with the HST, hydro bills are going through the roof, and many of them would simply love the opportunity to buy their son or daughter a Wii or an iPod this Christmas. But to read the auditor's report, the McGuinty Liberals, through MPAC, are handing them out like candy.

Where is your sense of outrage? Why aren't you pounding on your desk saying you're going to put a stop to the problems at MPAC instead of shrugging your shoulders and looking the other way? This has gone on for far too long. Are you that far out of touch? Have you lost that much gas? Are you that tired that you look the other way when they're giving out the Wiis and iPods that families are struggling to buy their own kids for Christmas?

Minister, how did you get so out of touch?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member from Peterborough and the Minister of Community Safety that that list is going both ways on both sides of the House.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We welcome the auditor's recommendations and I will point out—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will point out that, in fact, that practice was put to an end almost a year and a half ago, once we became aware of it. I'll table a letter with the House from the CEO of MPAC saying that those expenses no longer happen as a result of this government's policy and directives with respect to appropriate procedures.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I want to say to the minister responsible for Nintendo Wiis and iPods that those answers simply don't cut it when you have one in eight homes whose assessments are out of whack by 20% or more, and all you do is shrug your shoulders. You wash your hands and you walk away while scandal after scandal happens under Premier McGuinty's watch—from eHealth, to MPAC, to the OLG.

Premier McGuinty once famously said after eHealth that he fixed the rules. There would be no more sweetheart deals. He said there would be no more expense scandals, but now the auditor found out that almost half of the contracts at MPAC were untendered contracts, were sweetheart deals up to \$50 million a year. When will you actually stop talking about making change and make real change? Or do we have to change the government—

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

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have brought about substantial change, and let's review a little bit of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Honourable members, please come to order. Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Peterborough, a comment like that is not helpful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, government House leader, it's not.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's right, two more sleeps.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition is right: We've brought about substantial change, and let me tell you where we started.

First of all, we applied freedom of information to Hydro One and OPG, and what did we discover when we did that? We found untendered contracts to Tory friends in the hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of dollars.

We found that not only did that government have relatively minor expense challenges, they also had a box at the Air Canada Centre where a number of his colleagues were entertained quite lavishly. We got rid of that.

I read the Globe and Mail, I think it was Saturday morning, about Niagara tourism, and lo and behold, on page 1, who was the minister at the time who oversaw that challenge? It was the now Leader of the Opposition.

They've got no plan, no—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty said that the practice of untendered contracts would end, but it keeps happening over and over again. Nobody is ever fired. Nobody is ever demoted. Nobody has any consequences. And as a result, the McGuinty legacy of waste is vast and growing deeper still.

Almost 50% of the contracts given out were untendered contracts. We saw money given out for Wii consoles and iPods and up to \$50 million in untendered contracts.

You said it would stop. You said you'd stop it four years ago. The Premier said it would stop. It keeps happening over and over again.

You've run out of gas. You've lost touch. You've lost every opportunity to actually make change. The only way to bring change is to change this government and get rid of the legacy of McGuinty waste.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've built a legacy of change, and there's more change to come. And you know, we started last month.

Let's review what that leader and his party voted against. We brought in a bill to change lobbyist rules and regulations. That leader and his party voted against it. We brought in legislation and change to help people with their energy bills. That leader and his party voted against it. And we brought in real change to ensure that Ontarians have better health care and shorter wait times. That leader and his party voted against it.

This is a government that reformed what you did. There were no more Walkertons, no more Ipperwashes, no 10 million student days lost in education. That's the kind of change Ontarians voted for. They're going to get more real change as we build a better future for this province and this country.

Interjections.

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

I think with all this excitement in the House, some of you may be very anxious to get home for the holiday season. I can assure you that the Speaker could help facilitate an early trip home.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday's report by the Auditor General provided more evidence of an out-of-touch government with misplaced priorities. When it suits their political needs, this government can approve millions of dollars in infrastructure projects in a matter of mere weeks. But for the husband needing speedy treatment in an ER for his wife or the senior waiting for home care, it's been seven long years of empty promises.

Given the Auditor General's findings, does the minister still think that her government's plan is working?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, our plan is absolutely working, and the auditor himself recognized it.

Let me quote from the auditor's report. This is on ERs, for example: "Our research indicated that outside Ontario, there has not been much public reporting of emergency department data in Canada." That's one thing he said. On page 8, he said, "Given the adage that 'you can't manage what you can't measure,' the ministry's decision to gather length-of-stay data and report it publicly is a good initiative." On page 3, he said that "the length of time patients with minor conditions waiting in emergency departments almost met the four-hour target...." Page 27: "Most EMS providers acknowledged that the program reduced ambulance offload times, freed up ambulances, and brought emergency departments and EMS providers together to improve offload delays."

Our wait times in emergency departments are coming down—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For seven long years people have heard the promises of this government, and yesterday, the Auditor General showed them the results: ER

wait times unimproved since 2008; 50,000 patients stranded in hospitals with nowhere to go; waiting lists for home care stretching up to 262 days, and in some communities, it's not available at all.

How can the health minister stand here with a straight face and claim that her government's plan is working when everybody knows that it is not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We started measuring emergency department wait times in April 2008. Our baseline: 81% of people who went to emergency departments were seen, and their entire length-of-stay time was within the target. We started at 81%; we're now at 85%. We're on our way to have 90% of the patients who come to our emergency departments in and out of the emergency department within those target times.

We're making progress. We're not there yet; there is more to do, and we are doing that work. The recommendations that the Auditor General made actually reinforced that our strategies are the right strategies. We're starting to see results, and the results are impressive. Nearly half the hospitals in Ontario meet the four-hour target for the uncomplicated cases, and over one third of hospitals have met the eight-hour target.

We know we can do better. We're putting in place the right resources to do better.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The situation across Ontario is tragic. Last year, 50,000 people were left stranded in hospitals because there was simply no place for them to go. They were discharged but follow-up services simply are not available, and some languished in hospitals for up to 97 days more than necessary.

After all the rosy promises that this government has made, how can the McGuinty Liberals have allowed things to get this desperately bad?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the leader of the third party has a job to do, and that is to criticize the government. I understand that. I wish she would actually look at the facts, though.

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The truth is, we have made significant progress. When it comes to funding people through our CCACs, we've increased the number of people who are getting care; 200,000 more people now are getting care than when we took office. When it comes to spending in home care, we've increased spending by 64%. So we are very much focused on improving home care.

Our initiatives are showing results. The population is growing, the population is aging, and the investments we are making are making a difference. Is there more to do? Absolutely, and we are on track to continue the improvement in our health care system.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Minister of Health for my second question: The Auditor General also reported that most regions of the province have a waiting

list for home care with 10,000 names on it. That's 10,000 families that are scrambling to help a relative waiting for support or, worse, visiting that relative in the hospital while others languish in the ER waiting for that bed. After seven years of big promises, is the government ready to admit that their home care system isn't working?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Far from it; far from it. Our initiatives are working. Let me tell you a story that might demonstrate how this is working. There's a gentleman here in Toronto named Keith Cooper, a wonderful gentleman. He was a paramedic; he's now a retired gentleman. He was living in a long-term-care home here in Toronto. Now Keith Cooper is living at home because of the investments in home care. He's living at home, and he has a personal support worker come and visit him twice a day. The space he took in the long-term care is now being occupied by someone who needs the full array of supports in a long-term-care home.

So bringing people from long-term care back into their own homes, with the right supports, is part of our strategy. It's working for Keith Cooper, and it's working for many, many thousands of people across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The auditor reports that our current system is a hodgepodge mess that's failing patients. In the absence of any standards, each region has its own criteria for how often and how long a client receives home care services. Some Ontarians are forced to wait eight days for home care; others wait 262 days. Does the minister think it's right for geography to be the main determinant of what health care services Ontarians receive?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We agree with the auditor that funding to CCACs should not be based on the historical spending, but rather on the needs in that community. That is why we are moving to use HBAM. It's a methodology that reflects the population age structure, the demographics and the need in that community. So we are making this transition. We agree with the auditor that that's the way to go in the future.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The auditor has pointed to problems that should have been fixed long, long ago, and for seven years, patients have heard this government's promises, but they're still waiting in ERs for up to 26 hours, 50,000 patients who shouldn't be in hospital beds are trapped in them, and families that need home care beds for loved ones are waiting up to 262 days. After seven years of big promises, is the government ready to admit that their home care system is a shambles?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that takes great pride in the work we have done in health care. We have rebuilt a crumbling system. Think back to before we were in office. There was a headline that said that 22 out of 25 hospitals in the GTA were on bypass. That meant an ambulance could not accept any patients. That was a crisis.

We are now moving forward. We've got a million more people attached to primary health care. We're now

measuring our wait times, and we're bringing those wait times down. We have virtually all our surgical procedures now meeting those wait time targets. Because we measure, we know what we need to do next. Our MRI wait times are not where we want them to be, so we're making new investments in MRIs.

The health care system is far, far stronger now than it was when we took office, and the member opposite really should recognize what the auditor did that—

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

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario families didn't need an auditor's report to know that there's something very wrong in Ontario's hospitals. One in six patients in hospital should not be there, but because they are, other patients wait 26 hours, sometimes longer, in crowded emergency rooms.

You said the LHINs and the \$200 million you spent to reduce ER wait times would fix the problem. The auditor says they're not. What more will it take to motivate this government to change and fix the mess Premier McGuinty has made of Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier, we are measuring the issues. We have a much better handle on what the problems are than any previous government did, let me tell you. We are leading the country when it comes to public reporting. Your party didn't even bother to measure wait times; our government is measuring wait times. We're publicly reporting wait times. The auditor acknowledges and congratulates us for doing that.

We have made strategic investments. Our health care system is far healthier now than it was when we took over, and there are many ways that we can demonstrate that. For a start, access to primary care: When we took office, the number one phone call we received in our offices, and I dare say, the number one phone call you received in yours, was from people desperate to get a family doctor—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You can study and measure all you want, but the time for action is long past.

The auditor says half the triage diagnoses in Ontario hospitals are wrong. The media just reported that a 40-year-old woman suffocated to death while waiting for treatment in an emergency room. Tragedies like this happen because Premier McGuinty can't be bothered to fix the mess his LHINs have made of their efforts to coordinate patient flow in hospitals. Long-term-care patients are stranded in hospitals, while other patients can't even get in the door.

It's a moment of truth for the Premier's expensive LHIN experiments: They haven't gotten the job done. Will you change by scrapping the LHINs and put every last dollar back into front-line health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The opposition has lots of bluster, but they have no plan. They have absolutely no plan. The only plan they have is to take \$3 billion out of front-line health care. Now, they can pretend that they can cut spending and improve care, but they cannot. If they can, if they come up with a plan that demonstrates how they can cut \$3 billion out of health care and improve care, I'll vote for them. I would love to see their plan.

But until they have a plan, until they have a plan to improve health care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford, member from Simcoe North: tick, tick.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. New question.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday's Auditor General report confirms there's something seriously wrong at the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC. The Auditor General's analysis of 11,500 assessments showed that an astonishing one in eight were off the mark by 20% or more. Assessments that are as much as 20%, 30% or 40% higher than they should be force some people, especially seniors, out of their homes.

Will the minister admit that MPAC is badly run, and when will he fix it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We welcome the Auditor General's reports, as we welcome the Ombudsman's report.

I remind the member opposite that MPAC is in fact controlled by our municipal partners. I know that they welcome the recommendations as well. I've spoken with the chair of MPAC, the mayor of Stratford; many of the recommendations of the auditor in this year's report have already been acted on. I think that's appropriate.

Again, we're always looking for ways to do things better, and that's why we take the auditor's recommendations seriously and have, in fact, already responded to many of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: If the minister takes this issue seriously, why doesn't he take the fact that MPAC can't get assessments right seriously? It seems the management has no problem blowing thousands of public dollars on expensive meals and fancy gifts. Try explaining that to seniors forced out of their homes because of incorrect assessments that drive their taxes through the roof.

1100

Clearly, MPAC needs to be fixed. Will this minister, will this government, bring forward action to fix MPAC immediately?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes. I can report that all nine recommendations in the auditor's report have been accepted by MPAC, and a number have already been implemented. It is absolutely essential that we take these

recommendations seriously. I acknowledge the challenges associated with the auditor's findings, and I believe we've taken the appropriate steps, and the board has taken the appropriate steps to respond.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, the leader of the NDP was in Sault Ste. Marie speaking about energy. It's clear from her comments that they have no energy plan.

In contrast, we recently announced that the 27 towers being installed at the Pointe-aux-Roches wind farm in Essex county will be made with 100% Ontario steel from Sault Ste. Marie. Essar Steel Algoma provided over 4,600 metric tonnes of steel plate, valued at over \$3.5 million, to build the wind towers that will produce 49 megawatts of clean electricity in southwestern Ontario. Management at Essar Steel said they're beginning to see new business prospects open up, thanks to Ontario's commitment to building a clean energy economy.

Would the minister tell us if industry can expect to see more of these types of job-creating opportunities and investments in the green energy sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for this question. I can tell him that this government will always stand up for investment in Ontario and jobs for Ontario workers as a result of our growing clean energy economy.

The announcement last week in Essex county is a great example of what our energy plan is all about: steel from Sault Ste. Marie, clean energy for Essex and jobs supported and created from the north to the south of this province.

Just last week, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to announce that Samsung and CS Wind's new tower manufacturing plant would be located there—towers, by the way, that are going to be made with 100% Ontario steel. Two thousand tonnes is the projected domestic steel consumption of that plant. That's worth \$140 million.

Those who have no plan like the leader of the NDP can oppose those investments. We're going to stand—

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: Job creation is important, and certainly these recent announcements are excellent news for Ontario workers and for the 3,200 employees at Essar Steel Algoma.

Like most Ontarians, I have a hard time understanding how anyone could oppose new jobs being created by building a clean energy economy. Nevertheless, when the leader of the NDP was in the Soo, she criticized new power generation.

The Brookfield wind farm, the Starwood solar farm, the Heliene Canada solar panel manufacturer, the Essar Steel cogen and the St. Marys Paper biomass cogen are diversifying Sault Ste. Marie's economy while creating over a thousand jobs.

Even though the NDP opposes the creation of these jobs in Sault Ste. Marie and across Ontario, will the provincial government continue to support these initiatives through its long-term energy plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely, absolutely. This government will continue to support the investment in job creation that comes with making Ontario a clean energy global powerhouse. I agree with the member: I cannot understand how the leader of the NDP continues to oppose those jobs in Sault Ste. Marie, those jobs in Windsor-Essex and this great opportunity for Ontario's steel industry.

Let me tell you what Ken Neumann, president of the United Steelworkers, said: "More new jobs in Ontario are just what Ontario families need. And helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids, too...."

"From Steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy."

There used to be a time when the NDP used to support those Steelworkers. They've lost their way. We're standing up for Steelworkers. They're standing against them. We're proud to stand with the Steelworkers of this—

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

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. The news media have reported on the expenses of Joel Noden, formerly an executive at the Niagara Parks Commission. Did Mr. Noden ever pick up the expenses of any former Ministers of Tourism for meals, hospitality or even a single expense?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. There is a long-standing corporate culture at the commission. This issue existed over successive governments. By the way, Mr. Joel Noden was hired 13 years ago.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: When Tim Hudak was the minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: In fact, this issue existed when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Tourism. When the leader of that party was questioned about the complaints he received as tourism minister, his response was, "I don't have a recollection...." What he meant was that he did not have a plan. He did not have a clue.

On this side of the House we have a plan, a plan that has been in action since February of this year. We have a new chair and we have a new vice-chair. We see changes to the governance structure, the approval process, expenses and to the board and senior—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Surely with all the questions surrounding the emerging scandal at the Niagara Parks Commission, the minister will have been thoroughly

briefed. He should know. The question is simple and direct; the minister is compelled to answer. Did Mr. Noden's expenses ever include the meal, flight or alcohol expenses of a former minister, deputy minister or ministry staff?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Mr. Noden was hired by the PC government 13 years ago, and the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Tourism in 2001.

As I have said, the commission has had the same challenges over many successive governments. While the Conservative Party is engaging in partisan games, we are taking action. We are taking action to ensure that our agencies operate in a way that is more accountable and transparent to the people of Niagara and all Ontarians. But as we are moving forward with all this and changes to the commission, the opposition is playing political games. It makes you wonder when someone asks, are they afraid? Are they afraid of what is going to come out? Are they afraid that not being able to recollect complaints—

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

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Auditor General reported that less than \$510 million, or 16%, of the \$3.1 billion allocated to three infrastructure programs was spent by the end of the first year. That means that only an estimated 7,000 jobs were created or saved, rather than the 44,000 that your government projected.

My question is this: How do you answer to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed Ontarians that the McGuinty Liberals spent only a fraction of the money that was available to help put them back to work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, we're in the midst of the largest and most significant infrastructure program in the history of the province of Ontario. The program stops on March 31, 2011, and the audit was completed up until March 31, 2010, so there's a lot of time to go.

The projects that are being completed are 98.9% complete by March 31. There are a very small number that are not completed. What is significant in what the auditor said—"We had a global economic crisis." In that context, we're applying \$28 billion in infrastructure, with 300,000 jobs created by the end of March 31 and 400,000 estimated by the Conference Board of Canada. Our numbers are—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: What is bizarre about this is that at the same time that you're unable to get the money out the door to create and sustain jobs, on other projects, projects had virtually no assessment whatsoever. The

Auditor General says that some of these projects went forward without recommendations from officials in the ministries. “The haste made it ‘virtually impossible’ for the necessary review work to be done.” So recommendations weren’t obtained from officials in the field; ministerial staff simply decided on the back of an envelope what was going to be funded.

1110

How does the government explain the Wild West chaos that left some money unspent and other projects with virtually no recommendations to support them?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The process was very significant. There was tremendous due diligence that was done at the municipal level, provincial level and intergovernmental: federal and provincial. What we have are the exact words of the provincial Auditor General: “The responsible ministries devoted significant efforts to establish the appropriate systems and processes, and to adhere to ... reporting, and other accountability requirements.”

As well, the federal and provincial Auditor Generals did not name a single project that should not have gone forward. The processes, in the words of the Auditor General, were appropriate—“accountability and transparency.”

There were processes that needed to be improved. Our staff worked with the Auditor General. We’re implementing all of the processes that need improvement. But at the end of the day—

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

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In March 2007, the federal government announced up to \$960 million in partnership with the province of Ontario and five municipalities, referred to as the Flow initiative. This initiative would generate a combined investment of close to \$4.5 billion in public transit and highway infrastructure projects. As part of the Flow initiative, the province of Ontario has committed to extend the 407 eastward from Brock Road to Highway 35/115.

The opposition has recently begun saying that the province is not living up to its agreement under the Flow initiative to extend the 407 to the 35/115. My constituents in Peterborough are telling me how important the extension of the 407 is to the region’s economic well-being. The Highway 407 extension would provide a faster and easier option for my constituents to get through the Durham region into Toronto.

Minister, can you assure my constituents that the 407 will extend to the—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Peterborough for his consistent advocacy on this.

We know how important the 407 extension is to the communities in the Durham, Peterborough and the

Kawartha regions. That’s why we remain committed to completing Highway 407 through to Highway 35/115. We’re going to do it in an affordable, responsible, manageable manner. We’re going to build phase 1 to Simcoe Road, and the second phase will be built to 35/115.

Despite the economic challenges that we’ve confronted over the last couple of years, we’re moving ahead with the extension of the 407. We recognize that it will serve the majority of residents. Projects of this size are consistently built in stages, as was the first part of the 407. It was built in stages; we’re doing the same thing. We’re starting with the busiest section first. We’re going to get this road built.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, it is good to know that we are proceeding with a plan. This staged implementation ensures long-term transportation objectives are protected so those improvements can be implemented when appropriate.

The Leader of the Opposition has been telling the residents in Durham, including my constituents, that they will make the extension “a priority.” I find that interesting, because when the Leader of the Opposition is pressed for when his plan would be complete, he can’t provide a date. I know that Conservatives don’t have a plan for the 407, but local groups have expressed concern about the Simcoe Road termination.

Minister, can you please inform the House what your plan is?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d just ask all members on both sides of the House that—the noise elevation has gotten a little loud. Even with my earpiece, I’m finding it difficult to hear both questions and answers. I would just remind members that if they want to have conversation amongst themselves, we have side lobbies that are available for both sides to utilize.

Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have a plan to build the 407 out to 35/115, and that plan does not include selling it off at a fire sale.

The Leader of the Opposition knows, I believe, that this road needs to be built in stages. I think he knows that because that’s exactly what they did; they built the 407 in stages. They understand that that’s how the 407 needs to be built.

We know that they don’t have a plan. We know that because the MPP for Whitby–Ajax is saying that we’re reneging on the Flow agreement, but at the same time, the MPP for Oshawa is asking me about the properties MTO is acquiring to build the 407 to 35/115. If we weren’t building to 35/115, we wouldn’t be buying the properties along that corridor.

On this side of the House, we know that extending the 407 is essential to job creation and to economic growth. We have met with the mayors. I have met with the mayors in the region. We’ll be working with them to make sure that the infrastructure is in place to make sure that it is a safe build.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Jewish groups are criticizing the University of Toronto for accepting a shockingly anti-Semitic master's thesis. The Holocaust is a horrible chapter in human history that claimed the lives of six million Jews, yet this disgusting paper attacks educational programs working to ensure such evil is never repeated.

Minister, this House unanimously passed a resolution from the member from Thornhill condemning Israeli Apartheid Week. What are you doing as Minister of Citizenship to stop the rising tide of anti-Semitism?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I deeply appreciate the member opposite raising this. I too was greatly disturbed and, in fact, disgusted when I read the media reports. I want to say first and foremost that this government remains absolutely committed to fighting discrimination in all its forms. I want to add as well that the McGuinty government denounces all acts of anti-Semitism, which we believe are a particularly vile and pernicious form of discrimination, and we will continue our work to protect the human rights of our Jewish community and of all Ontarians.

I was proud that earlier this year, this Legislature in fact came together to condemn anti-Semitism on our university campuses, and we will continue our hard work on behalf of all Ontarians, including our Jewish community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I wish I could say that this hateful and poorly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable members—this is an important issue that all members need to be able to hear clearly, and I'd appreciate not having the interjections.

Member from Thornhill?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I wish I could say that this hateful and poorly researched paper attacking programs that use the horrors of the Holocaust to somehow show the dangers of discrimination and racism by Jews was an isolated incident. Unfortunately, it's only the latest example that we've seen. There are too many other cases, including this summer, where anti-Semitic material was found at the Scott Library, not to mention an attack on the Jewish student association. Minister, will you today speak up on behalf of Jewish groups who have been so deeply hurt by this piece of garbage and condemn it, not as an academic paper but for the hate it actually is?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I join them in condemning this attack on Ontario's Jewish community.

I want to reiterate that, as I mentioned, I was very proud earlier this year when the Legislature came together to condemn anti-Semitism on our campuses and in other fora. I look forward to later today, when there is a gathering of Jewish members from the Ontario community as we celebrate this important time of Hanukkah. I

look forward to being able to speak with many members of that community as I'm co-hosting that event that the Premier is attending, along with Monte Kwinter.

I also want to add that the state of Israel is a very good friend of the province of Ontario. I had the privilege of visiting Israel earlier this year with the Premier and a number of members of the Liberal caucus and of this government to improve our ties. So again—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The Premier met today with Toronto's mayor, Rob Ford. Following the meeting, the mayor stated that he intends to cancel the plans for Transit City without even taking the matter to council. Do this minister and her Premier agree with that assessment?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been very consistent in our conversations in the public, and very clear in our position that we're open to working with the new mayor and council and that we believe that council does need to weigh in on these issues. These are issues that are of great importance to all of the city of Toronto and, I would suggest, to the region, the GTHA. It's very important that council does have a voice on the move-forward position.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is also to the Minister of Transportation. The government says that they respect local democracy, so it's a pretty basic question and it needs a pretty firm answer: Does the Premier plan to let Mayor Ford scrap Transit City without the consent of the elected city council, yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's interesting, the member opposite yesterday wasn't so interested in council. Yesterday, she was just interested in unilateral action on behalf of the government. But my answer then is the same as it is now. We are very, very interested in working with the city of Toronto in a collaborative relationship. City council is the elected body that must weigh in on these issues.

These are issues that affect the city of Toronto. They affect the city of Thunder Bay, they affect the contracts that have been signed, and I think that it's a very serious conversation. Council members are meeting for the very first time today, and I look forward to that conversation with the new mayor, with the council members. I know that the Premier will be awaiting council's deliberations as well.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Education. When I am in the riding of Brant, I meet regularly with stakeholders in education and talk about how the government has been standing up for Ontario

families and their children, and how we are making Ontario even stronger, especially in education: primary, high school and post-secondary.

Since 2003, our government has focused investments in education. As a result, class sizes are down, graduation rates are up, and EQAO results clearly indicate that student achievement has improved. My constituents and Ontarians want to know how students in Ontario achieve compared to other jurisdictions outside of Ontario and even Canada. Are there any international comparisons that indicate how Ontarians are doing inside of all of education across the planet?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's a very important question, and I, too, have constituents who have come to me. They're very, very pleased with the investments that we've made and with the performance of students in Ontario.

Since 2003, there have been significant improvements. Our 15-year-old students are among the best readers in the world, and now, today, just released, is a study from the Programme for International Student Assessment, called PISA. The study found that 92% of Ontario students met or exceeded PISA's benchmark for reading. Ontario is the only province where our students performed significantly above the Canadian average in combined reading.

Giving students the best start has been a commitment of our government. We continue to make investments to support that. It builds on the good news that we received last week from the McKinsey report, yet another report, an independent report—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: It also speaks to the fact that it means that our teachers are doing a good job as well. I want to thank you for that reinforcement, and I'm sure that all of us in this House, including the opposition—it's a good-news story to know that we are performing on the world stage at a high level.

As a place of diversity, my riding of Brant consists of people from all over the world. There are over 120 countries represented, 85 languages spoken, and they are the key and the strength of our community. Like all parents, my constituents want to make sure that their children are getting the best education possible in Ontario and have that support and opportunity to do so.

Minister, education is an important part of our government's poverty reduction strategy. Ensuring that every student is getting the support that they need is important. Are all our students doing well in Ontario, or are some doing better? We need to know that in terms of our poverty reduction strategy.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I want to join the honourable member in thanking all of the people in our schools—teachers, principals, support staff and, of course, parents—because it's a concerted effort that has enabled our students to be successful. Together, we want to make sure that every student is achieving and reaching their full potential.

PISA today recognized Ontario as one of the few jurisdictions in the world where 92% of the students are performing above the benchmark regardless of socio-economic background or first language.

That certainly speaks very well of everyone in our school system. PISA recognizes this achievement as part of our commitment to both excellence and equity, a distinction that few other countries in the world have achieved.

So the honourable member and all members in the Legislature can go to their constituents and tell them we have one of the best school systems anywhere in the world.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Residents of Russell township have collected about 1,375 signatures opposed to a new dump in their community—and that's about 10% of their population—in less than a month, yet their own MPP has yet to introduce these petitions into the Legislature. I'm just wondering if the minister will do the right thing, stand up for Russell residents and stop this dump from moving forward?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find that an interesting proposition. What I can assure you is that at the Ministry of the Environment, we ensure that we protect human health and the natural environment. We do that because we look at things when it comes to approvals. There is no request from any proponent in Russell before my ministry.

But I understand that there is a proponent, and I've heard this from our excellent member who represents Russell; that a proponent is meeting with the community and sharing with the community what their thoughts are. My understanding, of course, is that this is a municipal issue, because there would be issues of zoning etc., so there is absolutely nothing in front of our ministry.

Our job at the ministry is to protect human health. We do that by looking at the merits, or lack thereof, of an application or a request. I can't prejudge that if there's no application in front of my ministry, and I would hope that you would share, as I know the member from Russell has been doing, that there is absolutely nothing before our ministry in regard to a proposed dump other than what we—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The residents don't want the dump, plain and simple, and they've outreached to my office. Perhaps the real reason the Liberal government won't table these petitions and won't answer the question is because of yesterday's damning report by the auditor, proving this government's total failure in waste diversion.

Now, Ontario PC candidate Marilissa Gosselin has been a very big supporter of the organization. She's been a leading advocate to stop this dump because she knows, like Russell families, that the McGuinty Liberals can't

meet their waste diversion commitments, and that's the reason that they're expanding dumps in Carp and building dumps in Russell. Yesterday's auditor's report confirmed that, despite their promise to divert 60% of waste, they're doing less than 12% in the IC&I.

Given the McGuinty Liberals' abject failure to divert waste from dumps, why should residents of Russell and Carp have to—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find that interesting. When we took government, people used to take used tires and just dump them in a ditch. That's illegal in the province of Ontario. We have a program to make sure that every tire is disposed of.

There used to be hazardous waste that used to go into our landfills. That was the legacy of the other government. We put in programs to make sure that waste electronics and hazardous materials are staying out of it.

There was a time when people would take organics and they would actually put them in the garbage. Now some 850,000 tonnes, last year alone, were diverted so they could be composted. That's the right thing for the environment.

When it comes to the blue box, a million tonnes of materials, just last year alone, were diverted from our landfills.

People in Ontario are doing the right thing. Where we need work is when it comes to the industrial, commercial and institutional sector.

We want to thank the auditor for his recommendations. We think that they're very thoughtful. We look forward to making sure that we protect the environment.

FOREST INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today, Fryer Forest Products Ltd. in Monetteville is celebrating its 50th anniversary by laying off each and every one of their 70 workers. Seventy people are going without a job, today; sitting at home. This is a major blow to the French River area.

They're not asking for a single penny from the treasury, like other companies; they just want access to the forest to provide jobs to 70 families who need them. Instead, Fryer's equipment sat idle in the bush while it took two weeks for the ministry to fax them an already approved approval to commence harvesting. The ministry signs agreements with Fryer to operate two shifts a day and then they don't give them access to the forest; they don't give them access to any logs.

1130

My question is simple: Why is the McGuinty government so bound and determined to throw 70 families out in the cold just before Christmas?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I very much appreciate the question from the member for Nickel Belt. Indeed, as the

member knows, we have been working very, very closely with Fryer Forest Products, as it has been an extraordinarily challenging time for them, and we will continue to do our best to work with them.

There are certainly some great challenges but some great opportunities in the forestry sector, as the member knows well. We are very excited about the wood supply competition that's in place, where we have freed up about 10 million cubic metres of wood and have had 115 proposals brought forward to us that we know will be creating thousands of jobs in the forestry sector. In fact, we have made some conditional offers already, and we will continue to move forward.

The member and I have spoken about this issue on more than one occasion. Certainly I will do whatever I can to continue to work with her and with the company, to see how we can help the community and the company.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister talks about helping the forestry industry, but I have 70 people right now sitting in Monetteville and in French River who are waiting for an approval, an approval that is not coming. So they cannot go into the bush, they cannot get any logs, they cannot bring wood to the mill, and they cannot be paid.

The critical issue for Fryer Forest Products is access to wood in a timely manner so they can bring wood to the mill, so they can pay their employees. The government can go on and on, but the reality on the ground in Nickel Belt is that those people are sitting at home because of a bureaucracy, because of a ministry's delay and because of inefficiencies.

Let me put that into perspective for you: 70 jobs in French River would be 70,000 jobs in the GTA. If 70,000 people were sitting at home waiting for government approval, the government would get on with it; they would help them out.

My question is simple: What am I going to tell those 70 people, those 70 families—

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I understand, as does everyone in the Legislature, but particularly our northern caucus members, about the impact of a job loss in any one of our communities and how extraordinarily significant it is and how difficult it is.

Again, as the member knows, we've been working closely with her and with the community and with Fryer Forest Products to try to find a resolution to this challenge.

Certainly the access-to-wood issue is one that's very important to us. That's also why we're in the process of moving forward on modernizing our forest tenure system. We want to be able to allow access to many other companies that are having difficulty getting access to wood supply.

To the member, again, I appreciate the question. We will continue to work with her and certainly work with the company to find a positive resolution, understanding full well the huge impact of such a decision.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. There have been some concerns expressed lately on the topic of crown land access restrictions in the north. Yesterday, an example was brought up in the Legislature where northerners are now being subject to access restrictions when attempting to enter certain provincial parks using roads that they traditionally travelled upon.

I know that many people in the riding and across the north would be grateful for an answer regarding this situation. Would the minister please tell the House what the government's reason is for restricting local access points to specific Ontario parks?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for the question.

I have to say that it was with good reason that the specific access point to Fushimi Lake Provincial Park was subject to an unauthorized motorized vehicle restriction. Had the member from Timmins–James Bay brought this particular case to my attention two weeks ago when I had originally asked, instead of waiting for question period, I would have been able to tell him that the restriction was a matter of public safety. There were concerns regarding snowmobilers entering the park through unauthorized access points, particularly over frozen creeks. I'm certain that people in the House would agree that public safety and liability should be treated with the utmost seriousness.

That said, snowmobile access is allowed to continue through the authorized access point at the main gate to the park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the minister providing some clarity on the issue.

Northerners, particularly people in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin, take the right to access to traditional lands very seriously. Living in northern Ontario, we grow up enjoying a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities and become accustomed to a certain way of life. While northerners realize the remote tourism industry brings jobs to northern Ontario and contributes to the area's overall economy, there is a fear that we are moving too far in favour of one side.

Furthermore, northerners heard the allegations recently made by a member of the Legislature against MNR employees who were said to be in conflicts of interest with their roles and planning authorities.

Would the Minister tell the House about what you have to say to individuals concerned about what they have heard lately regarding access to crown land?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thanks again to the honourable member. Northern residents continue to enjoy unrestricted access to a vast majority of Ontario's crown land.

We always work to balance the public's access to recreational opportunities with the need to protect and preserve our wilderness and enhance remote area experiences.

To the allegations about MNR officials benefiting from planning decisions: I've had staff look into the matter and we have yet to confirm a specific case of any conflict-of-interest violation. However, if anyone in this House knows of a specific case, I would encourage them to bring it to my attention.

MNR staff do an outstanding job protecting Ontario's natural resources. They're often active members of the communities in which they live and work.

It's important to note that access decisions are made through forest management and land use planning, both of which require public consultation.

I encourage anyone interested in resource management to be involved in our public consultation process.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, in my statement about climate change, I referred to the UNDP. It was recorded as NDP in Hansard, and I'd ask that that be corrected so it shows United Nations Development Program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order. The honourable member can correct his record.

M^{me} France Gélinas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, when my leader asked a question about the Bonin family, the Premier said he would like to see the actual hydro bill from the Bonin family. I have the bill here with me—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I appreciate the honourable member—and we'll see that that's forwarded to the Premier's office.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW
AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ
DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 120.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 120. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas

Elliott, Christine
Fonseca, Peter
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir

Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Savoline, Joyce
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 90; the nays are 0.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on government order number 21, a motion by Mr. Hoskins respecting immigration.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 90; the nays are 0.

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

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table a report of the Ombudsman on his investigation into the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services' conduct in relation to Ontario regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On December 2, 2010, the member for Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, rose on a question of privilege concerning the distribution of what he argued were election-style pamphlets on the morning of Tuesday, November 30, 2010.

The member purports that the distribution of such documents amounts to a matter of contempt because the

material promotes a proposed government program as if it already has the approval of the assembly.

I've had the opportunity to review the written material supplied by the member for Simcoe–Grey, the comments made by the government House leader, Ms. Smith, and precedents on similar matters.

Let me begin by correcting the assertion made by the member for Simcoe–Grey in his letter where he states that Speaker Curling “found a contempt of the assembly” on February 22, 2005. The following more complete text of Speaker Curling’s ruling reveals in fact that it was the opposite:

“The wording and the tone of the documents are not dismissive of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, they indicate that the government had plans and proposals that require not only negotiation, but also the introduction and passage of legislation. In particular, the board letter and press release contain conditional phrases such as ‘intends to introduce legislation,’ ‘we are proposing,’ and ‘legislation that, if passed.’

“With respect to the word ‘guaranteed’ in the documents, I note that it is not used in the sense that passage of enabling legislation was a foregone conclusion, but rather in reference to proposed payments to transfer partners and a proposed provision in future collective bargaining agreements.

“For these reasons, I find that a prima facie case of contempt has not been established.”

Notwithstanding that the member for Simcoe–Grey erred in his assessment of the conclusion of that ruling, the ruling is apt since its subject was quite similar to the one that we are dealing with today. A review of the pamphlet in question confirms the use of phrases such as “The McGuinty government wants to” and “We’re proposing,” wording that is almost identical to the conditional phrases used in the letter and press release that Speaker Curling ruled on.

The member for Simcoe–Grey also referred to a ruling by Speaker Stockwell on this same subject. In that case, Speaker Stockwell found a prima facie case of privilege did in fact exist. However, a review of the pamphlet that he had before him reveals quite different wording. It contained phrases such as “new city wards will be created,” among others, that Speaker Stockwell found to be dismissive of the House and which could reasonably have left one with the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was a foregone conclusion.

In my opinion, the pamphlet that the member for Simcoe–Grey has brought to my attention is more characteristic of the documentation that Speaker Curling dealt with. I cannot find that the language used is dismissive of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, the use of qualifying language such as “we are proposing” can only leave the impression that further steps are required before implementation is possible. I cannot find, therefore, that a prima facie case of contempt has been established.

I want to thank the member for Simcoe–Grey and the government House leader for their submissions on this matter.

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

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the House today two visitors and friends of mine, Les Armstrong and George Fortin from the great riding of Sarnia-Lambton, here for the festivities today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from York West, to welcome a group of grade 10 students who have been visiting Queen's Park today. These are students from James Cardinal McGuigan secondary school and their teacher Mr. Joseph Pulcini. I hope they've enjoyed their visit to Queen's Park today.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'd like to introduce Sandy Liguori, who's the incoming president of the Toronto Automobile Dealers Association. He's here along with his director of government relations, Frank Notte.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce a resident of York South-Weston: Rick Ciccarelli, who is here in the gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOOD AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS OF CANADA

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Food and Consumer Products of Canada. Representatives from their organization are here with us today at Queen's Park, and I want to thank them for taking the time to visit us to share their concerns and updates on their industry.

Food and Consumer Products of Canada is a national association that represents member companies, both small and large. The association works to ensure that companies can innovate and grow while also promoting responsible and ethical practices.

Ontario has a very productive agriculture industry, but it is not enough to simply grow food. We need people who can process the food we grow and get it to markets and consumers. Food and Consumer Products of Canada meets this need and contributes greatly to our economy.

The manufacturing sector of the food, beverage and consumer products industry employs 300,000 Canadians, generates almost \$22 billion annually in GDP and contributes more than \$100 million to charitable causes.

The industry embraces world-class regulatory standards while also advocating for smarter regulations. These smarter regulations would continue to ensure safety and quality while at the same time increasing efficiency.

I want to once again thank the representatives from Food and Consumer Products of Canada for being here

today, and I want to express the support of the PC caucus for this valuable association.

Thank you very much for allowing me the time.

RICHARD ALLAIRE

Mr. Jim Brownell: My riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry is very fortunate to have many individuals who demonstrate a strong passion and commitment to volunteer work. Recently, one of the hard-working volunteers in my riding was recognized with the 2010 Community Action Network Against Abuse Award of Excellence. I would like to congratulate and thank Richard Allaire for his tireless work on behalf of his community. This award of excellence was created to honour an individual who has made a significant contribution in the struggle against abuse.

Richard started volunteering with the Red Cross in 2002 as a volunteer member of the branch council. He then proceeded to become chair of the branch council, and Richard currently serves as past chair.

Richard has a particular interest and desire to address and prevent the issue of child sexual abuse in the community. Richard was a founding member of PrevAction in 2007. This group worked to address the impact of child sexual abuse and acted as a catalyst to assist other organizations in their work to end abuse. I surely hope their work continues.

Richard remains the chair of PrevAction and chair of the education subcommittee. He has also been a member of the board of directors of the Children's Treatment Centre for the past nine years, has been involved with the Celebrity Walk and Breakfast charity, the Bike-A-Thon Plus, and the dinner and roast.

I would like to thank Richard Allaire for his tireless work on behalf of the community and congratulate him on an award very well deserved.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: In a little over two weeks, millions of Canadians will be celebrating the holiday and Christmas season. Family and friends will be coming together to spread cheer and goodwill at parties and dinners across the country.

Unfortunately, for many this season brings with it added pressure and costs that simply stretch the budget too thin. There are many Ontario families that cannot afford to put food on the table. They rely on food banks to help them. In 2009, over 375,000 Ontarians used food banks, an all-time high for this province.

In April, I introduced a private member's bill that provides a simple solution to help families and Ontario farmers. Bill 78, a bill to fight hunger with local food, provides a tax credit for farmers who donate food to the food bank. This will help farmers pay for the harvesting and transportation of the food they are donating.

In September, this bill received unanimous and enthusiastic support on second reading. On October 7, my

colleague Ernie Hardeman called on the McGuinty government to move the bill forward and give it third reading before Christmas, but still it sits stuck in committee as thousands of men, women and children go hungry and decent food spoils in the field.

Don't leave this bill to die in committee. Let's give these families, food banks and farmers something to celebrate. It's time this government moved Bill 78 to third reading. Thank you, and merry Christmas to all.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: In the past, I've had the privilege of working with people with special needs and disabilities. It's a rewarding and humbling experience where your most human characteristics are tested and enhanced.

I would like to take a moment to speak about the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which was commemorated December 3. The United Nations established this day to promote a better understanding of disability issues and focus on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Everyone here has been impacted by people with disabilities. We have always approached them and walked away with a renewed sense of gratitude and respect for human potential, knowing that they have encountered many challenges. Many times they have overcome these challenges, and you could not help but think of the willpower and endurance needed to accomplish them.

Being a witness to their ability and will to conquer their challenges, I can attest that it's not physical or mental capacity that determines strength; it's the human spirit. I would like to highlight the progress we have made to provide services to people with disabilities, but I would like to remind everyone that our continued efforts are needed in order to remove any limitations and barriers facing people with disabilities in the province of Ontario, in Canada and the world.

NANTICOKE GENERATING STATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: As host to the largest coal-fired generating station in North America, Haldimand-Norfolk is under threat of the potential demise of a 630-strong workforce, the loss of up to \$3 million in goods and services to the local economy, as well as municipal taxes of \$4 million a year.

For years, coal closure has been promised with no plan in place once the utilities are idled, at least not until now. For that reason, we find heartening the recently announced long-term energy plan to "consider the possible conversion of some of the units at Nanticoke and Lambton to natural gas;" to explore a pipeline to Nanticoke, as well as to "continue to explore opportunities for co-firing of biomass."

Will biomass or natural gas save the generating station at Nanticoke? I can tell you that both OPG Nanticoke reps and Power Workers' Union members at my recent

Jarvis Symposium on Energy and Our Environment highlighted the potential for energy production and employment through refuelling and re-powering of the Nanticoke generating station. While both union and management are prepared to put shoulders to the wheel, we do need direction from the top.

After close to eight years of missed opportunities to continue the reduction of emissions at Nanticoke, I'm concerned government may let further environmental and economic opportunities slip through its fingers.

FIRST NATIONS POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again we have another example of how First Nations communities across Ontario are having to live the double standard of what services are available on- and off-reserve. Imagine my surprise when I was contacted by Nishnawbe-Aski policing in regards to services and communities, and in researching what can be done in order to resolve the problem, I find out that the Police Services Act doesn't apply to police on reserves.

I wonder why, in a province as rich as Ontario, a province that puts itself out to be one of the best places in Canada to live, we have a situation where people living on-reserve have one standard when it comes to the services provided by the province of Ontario and a second standard for everybody else living off-reserve.

In the case of Nishnawbe-Aski policing, I'm being told that the Police Services Act does not apply, which means to say that police officers have to go into domestic call situations, as far as domestic disputes, and into various investigations where they have to be alone and don't have to have a partner with them, as is mandated under the Police Services Act for municipal police forces or the Ontario Provincial Police.

Why is it, in the province of Ontario, that we can't have a standard that applies to all Ontarians? It's beyond me. We know that the fire code does not apply on-reserve. Why is it that the life of a person living on-reserve should be deemed any different than a person living off-reserve? We have learned, certainly, from the Kashechewan fire that that should not be the case, and I call upon this government to make sure we have the same standards applied to the citizens of Ontario, no matter where they live.

1510

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's my pleasure to rise in this House today to share some great news. I had the honour of attending the official sod-turning event at the construction site of the new public school being built in my home town of Brighton. It was a long-awaited announcement and an exciting day to see the shovel finally hit the ground.

Many schools in this province had been neglected by previous governments or left in a state of much-needed

repair and/or replacement. My riding of Northumberland–Quinte West has been extremely fortunate, with the construction of several new builds and additions. As a matter of fact, I attended the ribbon-cutting of the new Northumberland Hills Public School in Castleton last month, where I had the pleasure of meeting several people who attended the original school back in 1930. What an amazing new school, with all the most up-to-date technical features to bring our teachers and students into the 21st century.

We haven't forgotten the east end of my riding in Quinte West. They will see the brand new St. Peter's elementary school in addition to St. Paul's secondary school.

In the west end of my riding, Port Hope is proudly sporting a brand new school named Ganaraska Trail Public School, which opened its doors in September 2009. It will complement the addition to St. Anthony's and St. Mary's schools, also in Port Hope.

Today I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Premier, the Minister of Education and our government for having the foresight to invest in these infrastructure projects and, even more importantly, to invest in the future of our youth, providing them with the tools they need to succeed. They now are well-equipped to move forward with—

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

RIDING OF CARLETON–MISSISSIPPI MILLS

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to say something about my good friend Norm Sterling, who I've known for 30 years. I went to law—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member—

Mr. David Zimmer: The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: For over 30 years, he's been a member of the loyal opposition. He's a Conservative in the finest tradition of Bill Davis, and what has happened to him? The Conservative leader has allowed the member for Lanark–Frontenac to threaten his nomination. He's allowed that nomination to be threatened because he wants to sacrifice that member to the leader's personal right-wing ambitions. The PC leader has formed a Faustian pact with the member for Frontenac to threaten the nomination of that very fine Conservative. He has thrown the member for Mississippi Mills under the bus of his personal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. Come to order.

Honourable members, one of the things that is of extreme importance to the smooth functioning of this House is that we have respect for one another. We may have philosophical differences, we may have political

differences, but I am going to stop the honourable member because I do not appreciate the direct—

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's impugning motive.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd appreciate it if you would hear me through.

It is always healthy to attack the policies of government or to attack the policies of the opposition, but any time we start to cross the line and start to attack another member of this House, it does a disservice to this House as a whole.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): With that, I am going to stop the honourable member's statement and I'm going to ask the honourable member from Thornhill to go to his seat and withdraw the comment that he made as well, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Regretfully, but I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, just—

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order: Because you have ruled on the content of the statement and the uproar that it could cause in the House—and, in my opinion, that it also impugned the motives of one member—I would ask that the entire statement be removed from the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ruled on the matter and the statement had proceeded to that point. It is not for the Speaker to strike anything of what any member says in this House from the record. I'd just remind all members again that we do need to be cognizant of the different opinions that members bring forward.

DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to condemn the unwarranted attack made on the Canadian Centre for Diversity program, which teaches young people to fight discrimination through their March of Remembrance and Hope project, where young adults of diverse backgrounds travel with Holocaust survivors to sites of Nazi atrocities in Poland. The so-called thesis just published by a graduate student at U of T also has the audacity to condemn a program known as the March of the Living, which takes young Jews, with survivors, to Poland and Israel. Many of my constituents have been on the March of the Living, and to find that this thesis now condemns this as being racist is totally appalling and unacceptable, not only to my constituents but to everyone who is fair and decent in this province.

This unmitigated attack by this student at the University of Toronto against caring people who are trying to come to grips with the murder of over six million of their relatives, who were slaughtered by the Nazis, has no place in any university, nor does it have any place in Ontario. It is up to us in this Legislature to condemn this hateful and hurtful diatribe that is disguised as an academic paper. This is something that is below this great University of Toronto. It has no place in the Uni-

versity of Toronto and should be totally rejected by all of us who are against hate speech and are against hate. We should all condemn this incredible attempt to slander people who are trying to meet with their grief.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: 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. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent of the House that the statement from the member of Willowdale that was abbreviated on your orders be removed from the record of Hansard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? I'm afraid I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INDUSTRIE DU REMORQUAGE

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario / Projet de loi 147, Loi réglementant l'industrie du remorquage de véhicules automobiles en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: The bill provides for the self-regulation of the towing industry in Ontario in the public interest. The Towing Industry Council of Ontario is

established. The council, which is managed by a board of directors, is made up of operators of towing businesses and tow truck drivers, who must register with the council in order to carry on a towing business or operate a tow truck.

At least 40% of directors are appointed from outside the industry to ensure that the public interest is represented. The activities of the council are funded through fees established by a bylaw of the board and paid by registered persons and applicants for registration. A complaints and discipline procedure is provided to ensure that registered persons are held accountable for the way in which they provide towing services. Registrations may be suspended or revoked if necessary. The board of the council is provided with regulation-making powers that are subject to the approval of the Minister of Government Services.

I'd also like to introduce Doug Nelson, who's the executive director of the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario. He's up here along with several other leaders in the towing industry here in Ontario. Thank you for being here.

1520

PETITIONS

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before we move to petitions, I want to remind members that when presenting petitions, it is in order to either read the petition or give a brief synopsis of the content. Members may want to give the latter option some consideration if their petition is particularly lengthy or if it contains language that might otherwise not be permitted in debate. I've noted that a number of petitions make reference to other members by their names rather than their titles or their ridings.

I remind everyone again that saying something indirectly that cannot be said directly continues to be out of order. I ask that you be cognizant when you are presenting your petitions that if there is a name—I'll cite an example: There is a petition that contains the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's name. I would just ask and beg the indulgence of the House that they read into the record "the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka" so that we are being consistent with what we do.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

“Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

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

“That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election.”

I have many, many of them.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the McGuinty government plan for diesel trains.

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

As transportation critic I'm delighted to sign this for the NDP. We've always been on board, the only party to do so, and I'm giving it—

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

I also remind all the honourable members—perhaps we need to have petition school 101—that they are to read the petitions or the abbreviated version of the petitions and not editorialize.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

I send this to you via page Drew.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical labs in Tottenham, Stayner and Elmvale and to reduce lineups throughout Simcoe–Grey:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians.”

I want to thank Tecumseth Pines Home Owners' Association president Geoff Fromow for sending this petition to me.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail

traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

I support this petition, and I will sign it.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to present a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

I agree with the sentiment of this petition. I will sign it and send it over with page Gabriella.

1530

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

“Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation, after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

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

“To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis.”

As I agree with this, I have affixed my signature and given it to Sarah.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma, and it reads as follows:

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

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are being 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, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Elizabeth to bring it to the clerks.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I received over a thousand signatures from the Clean Train Coalition. This is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

Since I agree with this petition, I will sign it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: My petition reads as follows:

“Whereas industrial wind turbine developments raise concerns among citizens over ... health, safety and property values; and

“Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass municipal approvals and meaningful public input;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approval on all industrial wind farm developments and that the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines.”

I’m pleased to sign and support it and give it to Josh, my personal favourite page.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Be it resolved that” the Premier “immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I’m signing this petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That’s a great petition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker misspoke, because the Speaker needs to be non-partisan. The Speaker’s reference to that petition is that it was short and to the point.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers.”

I agree with the 1,160 people who signed this petition and I affix my signature.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario families are struggling in an economic downturn to meet the demands of eco taxes, the HST, energy price hikes, wasteful spending and increased taxes;

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

“Initiate the process for legislation to allow Ontario residents to recall Dalton.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The same applies to the earlier Speaker’s ruling that we need to refer to titles, ministries or ridings, and not even an individual’s first name.

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The guidelines for petitions—people put these together last September or October. There’s no guideline. I mean, I’m referred to as Toby Barrett in my riding, not by my riding name.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s very clear under parliamentary procedure and customs that we refer, notwithstanding anything that is written in a petition or if somebody was quoting from something—the Speaker would rule that one must use a title, a ministerial title or a riding name. The Speaker will continue to do that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L’AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to lead off third reading debate on Bill 135. Of course, we don't have much time to debate this, because we do have a draconian time allocation motion. Actually, the subcommittee for the finance committee met last Wednesday for public hearings on Thursday—the very next day, so obviously, how's the public supposed to even be aware of them?—for clause-by-clause on Monday, and here we are, Tuesday, in third reading debate. That same time allocation motion limits debate to an hour. So they are, obviously, rushing this through.

I know we have a couple other members who want to speak, so I've shortened my notes as much as possible.

As I previously mentioned, this is a bill that involves amendments to many acts, but its primary purpose is to provide a 10% energy benefit, which will cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion each plus interest. The other thing that the bill does is to allow the government to make additional expenditures, and given the revelations of the Auditor General's report yesterday, I'm not convinced that taxpayers are prepared to hand over any more money to the McGuinty government or its agencies. I'll come back to this point later.

First I want to deal with the energy cost, because it is likely the leading issue that constituents are contacting me about. The introduction of the benefit calls into question the McGuinty government's green energy policy, or as I call it, the "buy high, sell low" energy policy. The problem is that consumers are left holding the bag.

I received this email last night and I want to share it with my colleagues. It's a little long; I hope I can get through the whole thing.

"Hi, Norm,

"Just so that you and your colleagues have the details to back up the \$9 billion per 1,000 MW waste statistic that was quoted in the House, the following will provide you with how the number is calculated.

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"Hydro Quebec has been entering into 20-year fixed-price contracts (subject to an annual inflation factor) with their neighbouring US states (Maine, Vermont, New York, etc.) at approximately 6.5 cents per kWh. If one allows for an inflation factor of 2% per year over the 20-year period, then the price at the end of the 20 years would be approximately 9.7 cents per kWh for an average price over the 20 years of approximately 8.1 cents per kWh. For the purposes of my calculations I have allowed for an average price over the next 20 years for renewable hydro energy from Quebec to be 8.5 cents per kWh. As the OPA—the Ontario Power Authority—"is paying 44 cents per kWh under the FIT"—feed-in tariff—"contracts it is entering into with solar providers of 10-MW or more solar farms, then a contract with Hydro Quebec would be for 35.5 cents (0.44 less 0.085)

per kWh less than what the OPA is contracting to pay for solar power under the FIT program contracts for the same 20-year period. It is important to stress also that hydro power is available continuously during the course of the day—unlike solar, which is only available during the middle of the day when demand for power is not at its peak (such peaks are 7-9 a.m. and 6-9 p.m. when no solar is available)."

I won't go through the whole thing because I know I won't have time. I'll miss a section but get to where he's making the calculation.

"With the OPA contracting to pay an unnecessary excess of 35.5 cents per kWh for solar power, then the excess payment per 10-MW solar farm works out to be \$93,294,000.

"Per 1,000 MS this works out to be \$9.32 billion (hence my rounded-down number of \$9 billion per 1000 MW of solar power...)"

Obviously, this constituent has done a lot of research. I don't have time to read his whole email in, but I will conclude his email by reading, "These are issues that deserve addressing by the House before these FIT contracts sink the province." And he points out the huge, excess amount of money that these contracts will cost; and even the government admitted in its fall economic statement that over the next five years they're predicting prices are going to go up 46%, despite having said that they would only go up 1% a year based on the feed-in tariff and the green energy program. The latest number is 46%, and I'm afraid it may be much more than that.

This bill also deals with spending money, so I'd like to get to the Auditor General's report and the argument that we cannot support a bill that provides for additional spending by the McGuinty government, as Bill 135 does.

Premier McGuinty time and time again shows his lack of respect for taxpayers' money. The Auditor General's findings are troubling, not just because they reveal waste but because this is another in a string of reports that exhibit years of waste. It signifies a complete disregard for how hard Ontarians work and how precious their tax dollars are, at least to them.

I want to run through some of the Auditor General's remarks as they relate to MPAC in particular. The report indicates that of 1,400 transactions reviewed, one in eight indicated that "the assessed value differed from the sale price by more than 20%."

"These variances most often occur because the corporation does not have up-to-date property data from a property inspection."

So some property owners may be over- or under-assessed and therefore are paying more or less than their fair share.

The Auditor General made a number of observations related to how MPAC manages its staff, carries out inspections and updates its records. More disturbing to me are the revelations about spending related to procurement of goods and services. To begin with, MPAC spent more than \$50 million in each of the last five years to acquire good and services; however, the Auditor Gen-

eral's audit revealed that from almost all the acquisitions it reviewed, there was no document to justify the acquisition or to demonstrate that alternatives had been considered. And often the paperwork was either missing or had not received proper approval. Furthermore, for almost half the acquisitions, there was no evidence that they had been acquired competitively, and where there was paperwork, it failed to show what criteria were taken into consideration in selecting the successful vendor.

In one example, a multi-year contract with a potential value of \$450,000 was awarded to a vendor even though the vendor scored zero on all selection criteria. Other instances show that MPAC awarded agreements worth just under \$100,000, each to three different contractors, with little or no supporting documentation. The agreements were each extended between 12 and 14 times, which resulted in total payments of between \$1.1 million and \$1.6 million. Worst yet, some of the agreement extensions were approved long after the additional work had been completed and paid for. Invoices for consulting services revealed many instances where no supporting time sheets were provided, or any other supportive documentation. In other cases, the hourly rate billed exceeded the rate agreed to in the contract.

In most cases, reimbursements for travel expenses were not supported by receipts. This included an \$11,000 travel expense claimed by a contractor. The Auditor General found several instances where senior staff were reimbursed for travel to out-of-province destinations which were questionable, including a trip to attend the North American Conference on Customer Management, "Inspiring Relationships for Profitable Growth and Personal Fulfillment," in California.

The Auditor General's sampling of reimbursements for meals, hospitality and employee rewards disclosed \$955 for a dinner for 12 people at the CN Tower for a department celebration of year-end results; \$746 for a Christmas lunch for 16 staff; \$550 for a boat cruise; \$625 for gift cards; and \$1,725 for custom golf clubs, Nintendo Wii consoles and iPod touch models purchased as promotional gifts. The Auditor General rightly questioned why such promotional gifts were needed in the first place.

Jim McCarter put it succinctly when he said, "Our review of a wide variety of expenditures for goods and services found that the corporation"—MPAC—"did not comply with good business practices or with its own mandatory policies and procedures, where such existed."

For these reasons and countless others, how could we on this side of the House possibly support a bill which will put more taxpayer dollars in the hands of those who have demonstrated time and time again that they are reckless with those precious dollars?

We will not be supporting Bill 135. I've gone very quickly through my notes and missed half of them so that the member from Durham, as usual, will be able to speak. Also, I know the member from Thornhill, who will also be speaking, wishes to get some comments on the record. Thank you for the opportunity, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In the tradition of our House leader and member from Welland—who pointed out to the House something that we should all know, that the title of a bill is debatable—I'm going to take the wonderful opportunity given to me by the McGuinty government to debate the title of this bill, Bill 135, Helping Ontario Families. Let's talk about how this government has helped—or not—Ontario families.

Certainly, we have evidence in this last week alone: two, might I say, damning reports about the ways in which the McGuinty government has done anything but help Ontario families. Just hours ago, the Ombudsman released his report about the G20 weekend and what went on here, which I think people across Ontario should be horrified at. This is really a confirmation of something most of us already knew: that this government passed a secret act—actually, enacted a secret act. It was hidden, as the Ombudsman said, in plain view, an act that he claims should have been deemed illegal and unconstitutional. They did it at a time, if you can imagine, when the House was in session without letting any of the duly elected MPPs, including some of their own backbenchers, know what they were doing, and certainly without letting the public of Ontario know that most of their rights had been taken away with the stroke of a pen.

Let me tell you what it looked like on the ground in Ontario. We assume some rights in this province to be inalienable, if I can use that word. One of them was to be able to walk around the streets of our own city without being harassed or searched without a warrant; certainly the use of the streets of our city, we assumed—all of that taken away. We expected that when and if we were arrested, there would be reasonable charges and we would have access to legal counsel—all of the obvious rights of what we deem a democracy.

Let me tell you what I witnessed first-hand in my own riding—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order: I'm not sure what title the member for Parkdale–High Park thinks she's referring to, but this afternoon we are debating Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. I would ask that she refrain from the course of discourse that she is on and perhaps discuss the budget bill of the fall.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member that she should keep her remarks directly related to the bill.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Is it not entitled also Helping Ontario Families, Madam Speaker?

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay, back to the budget bill.

Let's talk about how money was spent, then. As it is a budget bill, of course, we can talk about what the money is spent for, and it's certainly not spent for helping Ontario families.

We heard from the Ombudsman this morning about how money was spent the weekend of the G20 in this

province. I can tell you that in my own riding of Parkdale–High Park, the money was spent by the McGuinty government to stop young people without warrant, to search their backpacks without explanation, to arrest some and to take over the streets. This is what it looked like when the McGuinty government enacted this secret act. Certainly, that is how their money was spent.

But if they would like to talk about the 10% reduction on hydro bills that's only going to be good till May, I'm happy to come back to that, too. I'm happy to talk about—

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Despite being heckled by the government House leader and the Minister of Energy, I'm happy to talk about the 46% rise in hydro rates that the people of Ontario are going to witness, versus the 10% break they'll get back for a while, eliminated at any moment by the stroke of a pen of the cabinet. I'm happy to talk about that as well.

It's really something when—and I've said this before in this House many times. I think particularly when a woman is standing here, to be shouted down by a male Minister of Energy is a little egregious in the same week as December 6—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Methinks they doth protest too much.

Let's talk about the budget—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order: My colleague three chairs away from me is speaking and I can't hear her. I would appreciate if the government would stop trying to shout her down so she cannot have her say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's not a point of order.

I'd ask all members to come to order.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, when we're talking about government monies being spent and how they're spent, one thinks of another report that came out in this last week, and that is the Auditor General's report.

There, we're looking at money being spent—billions, in fact, being awarded; “mis-awarded” is perhaps a better term—money going out with little tempering; money going out, really, with only a few hours spent; money going out to not shovel-in-the-ground-ready projects, as it was accounted for—which reminds me of, shortly after I was elected, the Collegate affair, where \$35 million went out the back door with little accounting. A million dollars to a cricket club, if I remember correctly. Now they've outdone themselves in the McGuinty government. Now we have billions going out with little accounting.

Also in that Auditor General's report, when he looked at money being spent by the McGuinty government, he looked at perhaps some of the egregious ways in which it's not being spent. I think of the support payments to all of those families, women and children, who are waiting

before Christmas, perhaps with an eye if not to buying a gift, at least to paying the rent and feeding their children. We learn that around 20% of those awaiting support payments are forced to go on social assistance because they're not receiving them from the government agency that is charged with providing them, and that only about 20% to 25% of the cases even get resolved through this agency. That's truly a damning statistic about the way this government handles the precious tax dollars and the precious lives, one might say, of the most vulnerable.

Certainly, where MPAC is concerned, where property assessments are concerned, in response to questions today from the opposition members, this government seemed to blame the municipalities for something that is clearly their charge and their warrant. I know this is nothing new—the government acts as if it is—that the Auditor General brought to light. Sadly, unfortunately, we know that in my riding and across the ridings in other MPPs' areas MPAC assessments and complaints against MPAC are constant.

My staff became de facto agents for our constituents arguing with MPAC when the last round of assessments came out. We had town halls on the issue, so this is nothing new. The Auditor General has just shone a light on something every MPP knows goes on in their ridings: that MPAC doesn't know what it's doing when it comes to assessing properties. Many of the assessments are 20% over the value of houses.

Certainly we've got lots of evidence—and we've been collecting it in my riding for years—about MPAC, but this government acts as if this is a revelation brought forward by the Auditor General. Well, perhaps it is to them. Perhaps they're not listening to their constituents enough.

Also in the Auditor General's report about the way money is spent in this province, we heard that 50,000 patients are stuck, are languishing in hospital beds, who should be in long-term care or certainly should be at home perhaps, receiving some much cheaper and perhaps more appropriate care through our CCACs. Again, the government gets up and says, “We're working on it; things are getting better.” If you are one of those 50,000 patients who are in hospital risking their health being there, for heaven's sake, who are waiting to go to a long-term-care bed, that seemingly doesn't exist. Surely “working on it” isn't an answer; surely “things are getting better”—well, the question is, for whom are they getting better? Certainly not for those 50,000 patients, certainly not for those thousands of families that are awaiting child support payments; it's certainly not getting better for them.

The government can shout all they want, but the fact of the matter is that everybody sees what they seem incapable of seeing. Carol Goar, who is a constituent of mine, wrote a wonderful column the other day, and I'm going to quote from it. She says, “The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of the rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list” from

the government crowing about what they've done that's good that never manifests in their paycheques, in their social assistance cheques or in housing.

Guess what? Four housing ministers and three years later, we finally get the long-awaited, long-ballyhooed housing report. Think about it. There were thousands of submissions and people hours that went into long, exhaustive consultations. What did they get out of it? Here is what they didn't get: not one new unit of affordable housing, not one new dollar for affordable housing, not one new rent supplement, which is what all the food banks have been calling for, which is what all those who are active in the anti-poverty field are calling for, and certainly not even a change to the Planning Act allowing municipalities to bring in inclusionary zoning if they wanted. I have a stack this thick in my office of municipalities that have called on the government to allow them to do that. The government won't even allow the municipalities to look at that option. That was the long-awaited housing strategy.

This government has become a complete master at what one might call spin. But let's put it this way: They've put a new spin on spin. What they do is bring in those who are active in various fields, they allow them to speak, they consult with them endlessly and make them feel important and promise them that they are going to deliver something, and then, at the end of what is often years of study, years of consultation, they bring in virtually nothing in response to all of their demands.

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Again, it's not just the New Democratic Party saying this; it's activists in the field. It's Campaign 2000 who are saying this; it's tenants' organizations who are saying this; it's Star columnists who are saying this; it's the Wellesley Institute saying this. It's institute after association after group after activist collective saying this. This is not a government that's helping families. This is a government that's spending their own taxpayers' money in a way that shows very little return for the money spent and, in fact, will burden the next several generations with debt. That's the reality.

What people in Ontario need to know is that for all the inaction, this government is still paying about \$10 billion a year in interest on accumulated debt—\$10 billion a year. It's unbelievable.

Mr. Jim Wilson: And next year it's rising to \$16 billion.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My friend says it's rising to \$16 billion. This is just the interest, in an era of extremely low interest rates.

Now, imagine for a minute the housing that \$10 billion could buy. Imagine for a minute the extra adults in our classrooms that \$10 billion could buy. Imagine the reductions in tuition in our post-secondary institutions that \$10 billion could buy. Imagine the number of long-term-care beds that \$10 billion could buy. I mean, imagine the infrastructure that could be developed. Imagine the jobs that could be created for \$10 billion, and going up, I'm told, to \$16 billion. That's just the

interest; it's just the interest on the debt, which this government has managed to double in seven years.

I remind the House that one of my personal heroes, voted the greatest Canadian by listeners to CBC, Tommy Douglas, always produced balanced budgets. He actually managed to do a great deal of progressive legislation, and always produced balanced budgets. This government isn't giving us a great deal and is managing to spend an enormous amount. This is the worst of possible realities that we have now in Ontario.

So to go over a few ways in which this government is not managing the money of Ontarians wisely is to simply look at the flurry of reports that we've received from independent agencies, and also from government ones: the Auditor General—now, there's a radical—who has condemned the way that this government is spending its money; the Ombudsman, who comes in with a report about a particular weekend that shall go down in infamy in the history of Ontario—there was money ill spent, I'll tell you; the housing report and the so-called anti-poverty consultation, whose results won't come in until 2012—now, if that isn't a campaign promise, I don't know what is. Meanwhile, the special diet allowance of \$250 is being restricted.

The housing report that provides no housing, a housing report that provides not one unit of new housing—amazing. When my husband and I were in Sweden, a country of nine million—we have some 13 million in Ontario—they managed to produce 100,000 new units of housing a year for 10 years. But this province, with 13 million, can't even fulfill the 2003 promise of the Premier for 20,000 new units. Housing activists have been asking for 10,000 new units a year. Don't hold your breath, I would say to all of those anti-poverty and housing activists out there and all of those who want to see more democracy, not less, in the province of Ontario. Don't hold your breath, because with the interest payment of \$10 billion and rising to \$16 billion a year, you're not going to see a lot of new spending in any area in this province unless something dramatic happens across the aisle.

So certainly, when it comes time to help Ontario families with the way that we spend money, giving them a little bit back and then charging them a whole lot more isn't our idea of the way to go about it. When it comes time to help Ontario families, I certainly wouldn't go about it by enacting secret legislation that's put into place secretly that takes away their rights. When going about helping Ontario families, I wouldn't have a government agency called MPAC that rates their house as worth 20% more, or one for those who need child support payments that doesn't answer their calls and solves only 20% of their cases. I also wouldn't award billions in infrastructure money that was given by the federal government without much perusal at all, and certainly not to shovel-in-the-ground-ready projects when so many need so much.

I certainly wouldn't call it helping Ontario families when a housing report and its so-called anti-poverty—

remember, this is a government that said it was going to reduce poverty by 25% in five years. They're actually on track to increase poverty by 25% in the next five years. That's closer to the truth.

Is this a government that's helping Ontario families? Not any of the families I know, not any of the people I speak to when I knock on doors, not any of the constituents who call in to complain about this, that or the other file—not any of them.

This is a bill that gives a little bit back, as a campaign promise, so to speak, while taking a whole lot out. The dumb-and-dumber, not-so-smart meters—the ATM machines that are now being installed in everybody's house—will make sure that the 10% off their hydro bill is quickly compensated for by huge increases. We're looking at, we've heard, 46% in the next while.

One could go on about how this government is not helping Ontario families and how this government is absolutely not managing their money wisely or well and will continue to do so until that halcyon day in October 2011.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I just want to speak briefly to this bill—take this chance to speak to it.

A couple of things that we need to know about the 2010 fall budget bill, or Bill 135: We are helping Ontario families, farms and small businesses with their electrical costs. The proposed Ontario clean energy benefit will provide eligible consumers with a benefit equal to 10% of the total cost of the electricity on their bills, including tax, effective January 1, 2011. The opposition parties were requesting an 8% reduction; we've gone beyond that. This will help over four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms.

Electrical bills are rising because of the necessary and unavoidable new investments required to ensure that Ontario has a clean, modern and reliable system. Ontario families and businesses are now paying the true cost of electricity, and every little bit of assistance helps during these lean times.

The proposed OCEB is in addition to several measures in place, or proposed, to help families and businesses cope with rising home energy and electrical costs. Our Open Ontario plan is creating jobs and protecting services. Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth will help create nearly 600,000 new jobs within the next 10 years. Income taxes have been cut for nine out of 10 taxpayers, and we are protecting the progress Ontario families have made in their schools and hospitals.

Unlike in the 407 deal made by the previous government, which sold it to a Spanish interest, the province retains control over fees charged by Teranet for statutory services.

Other members of my caucus are going to speak to this issue as well. I'm very pleased to support this bill, and I urge all members of the House to do so as well.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to speak for a few minutes and reserve some time for my friend from Durham.

I want to focus specifically on Bill 135's aspect pertaining to the 10% clean energy benefit because, to me, to call this a bait and switch is a mild description of what's being done to Ontarians who have to pay electricity bills. Let's be honest: That's every Ontarian who lives in a house or rents an apartment—anybody.

The title of the bill is Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010. One thing I'm going to give this Liberal government credit for: Boy, do they know how to entitle bills. They all sound great, but when you take a look at what's in them, it's just unbelievable.

1610

I'm going to use my time to read a couple of comments into the record because the Liberals seem to be in denial when it comes to what comes into their email queues or into the mailbag when the letters are delivered at the office. They're getting the same things I'm getting, and I'm just going to pull some salient quotes out.

"I can't help but think that my liberty is being challenged here and that I am being told how I should live and conduct my activities within my own home or pay, literally, the consequences. It's one thing to educate a population about energy efficiency, as there is already plenty of incentive to curb costs, but another thing entirely when government starts dictating, in a very surreptitious fashion, how and when to do so. And we're not talking about some frivolous action that is easily curtailed but rather a fundamental service that cannot be avoided and is, in fact, a matter of life and death in this country.

"In view of all the economic challenges the citizenry of this country have recently endured, how can this policy be justified? Is this yet another assault on our pocketbooks as costs of living continue to skyrocket while wages remain stagnant or am I just to be numbered with the faceless many who have slipped through the cracks?"

That's one. Here's another:

"We increased temperatures for AC and other positive habit changes. Our usage is aligning to the optimal model in that 56% of our usage is on off-peak, with another 27% in mid-peak. And my bills have gone up over \$200. Now that's a reward for conservation and moving usage profiles.

"As a father of three children I would much rather invest my hard-earned money in other priorities for my children, not to support a very inefficient and ineffective organization like the Ontario Power Authority...."

Here's another one:

"Peter, we recently had our smart meter installed. Today I received my first bill. My hydro rate went up \$40, which alone is close to \$500 more a year.

"That is a substantial increase. I dare anyone to explain to me how I can conserve energy and save that kind of money or come close. I don't know who put this

into effect but I see only as another huge tax grab by the government.”

It goes on and on. Where do I begin to debate this? I can't really debate the fullness of the bill. How this Premier has the nerve to label a bill “Helping Families” when all he's done is tax them to death, I don't know.

The truth is, this is just one more omnibus bill that says one thing but really means another under this government. It's on and on and on. Tax us to death, and pretty soon, you know what? We'll die. You're killing this province. That's what you're doing.

As usual, we're given very little time to review amendments that are highly technical and warrant greater scrutiny.

We're constantly inundated with do-nothing bills under this Liberal government. The McGuinty mantra: “Say very little, offend no one, accomplish nothing, and go ahead and you'll be re-elected.” Not so. October is coming.

Just look at their amendments. They divert attention from the real issue, and the real issue is the fall economic statement that drives this bill. The statement is further proof of the McGuinty government's fiscal mismanagement.

Expert economists, not us, have judged Dalton McGuinty as the worst fiscal manager amongst all the other Premiers—the Premier who has managed, in seven and a half years, to double the debt that was incurred from Confederation to the point in 2003-04 when he took office.

Ontario's real per capita GDP has declined by 8% since 2000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty Liberals spend \$2.1 million more every hour than what they collect in revenue, and they're going to give the people of Ontario a 10% rebate on energy. Well, blow me down. Isn't that amazing?

We can't trust that the McGuinty government won't use provisions of this bill to raise taxes further. We cannot support Bill 135, and this side will not do so.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: Bill 135, in terms of this particular budget bill, is interesting because we have members of the NDP, who were originally asking for an 8% reduction on their energy bills, and we're providing a 10% reduction, and that's not good enough. That's bizarre. And now we have members on the Tory side belittling and saying that 10% is nothing. I find that contrast beautiful.

The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has been saying that we've been able to balance that whole need that we've tried to create in the budget bill, and the Tories and the NDP have taken nothing but glee out of trying to pull it in both directions.

So I personally think, from what I'm hearing from the Tories, going on and spewing about what they do, and the NDP doing what they're doing, we've probably struck the balance and found the right spot that the people of Ontario are looking for.

A disaster that the previous government did in the energy file—they have forgotten what happened before

2003. They don't want to even think that there's history. I wouldn't be surprised if we don't see a private member's bill, the “before 2003 didn't exist” bill, because they don't want to acknowledge that they made this mess. We're fixing it.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to say Bill 135 is a great bill. I look forward to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, because she's going to set the record straight, like she always does.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I was urged to come in. I was listening to one of the greatest speakers in this Legislature, the member from Thornhill. His passion and his forcefulness and his grasp of the issues say it all. I think it's a classic case of a person who knows what he's speaking about and knows how to speak about what he knows about. I can tell you that the excitement here since his remarks is virtually palpable. You could actually feel the House. He touched a nerve. The House leader is a person who is given to speaking quite often to herself, but nonetheless, she is excited about this. I think she knows that the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, our critic, Mr. Miller, was another person—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Oh, now he gets around to you.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. They share the file, and they allowed me to sort of play cleanup.

The one thing this bill does or attempts to do is to cut your hydro bill by 10%. Now, the 10%—how it works is, first of all, if your hydro bill is, say, \$100, your bill will now be \$100 plus 13%. So it's \$113 because of the tax. If you pay \$13 in tax, they're going to give you 10% back: \$10. So they're still making \$3 on your taxes. So you can't have it both ways, as much as they would like it to be seen that way.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're saying that I'm wrong. Tell me that the tax isn't 13%. Tell me it isn't 13%. They can't say that. So all I'm doing is reporting.

Now, how unfriendly are they as the government? There's something that the viewers should know. I'd ask you to look up this regulation. The regulation is regulation 440/08. This regulation here is another example of a job-killing, red tape—I'm going to repeat it; the leader may not know about this. It's job-killing; it kills jobs and it kills families. This small business regulation—you'll have to look it up. Actually, the multi-million dollar deals that they make with Samsung, companies in foreign countries—that's not what they're doing. Right here, that regulation actually will require small business to have a site plan for a propane refilling operation and their business. This could be a small family business—a garage, a campground. Now they're going to have to spend thousands and thousands of dollars, when in fact the government could easily have asked the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, to do their job. That's all they had to do: to inspect and enforce. But what they did is use the heavy hand of cabinet minutes and regulations to put another business out of business.

How did they get the money, the \$1.3 billion that this 10% cut is going to cost? Where did that money come from? Because they have a deficit of almost \$20 billion. They've decided to give you part of your money back, 10%, and they're actually borrowing it. They're actually borrowing that money by selling the rights for Teranet for 50 years. That's where the money's coming from, so that their deficit doesn't go over \$20 billion.

It's another example. This bill, and that regulation 440—I'd ask the House leader to look it up—it's a job-killer. That's what I've been told by the industry. We have asked two questions in House on it, and they have refused to work with small business. That's a job-killer. At the same time, they're giving \$7 billion to Samsung to build an infrastructure on renewable energy. I can't believe it. Why wouldn't they just try to help the people of Ontario instead of continually sticking their hands in their pockets?

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There's one more example I want to put, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence. The region of Durham is over 600,000 people. What have they done to Durham region? They just stopped a major arterial highway, the 407, right on the main street. The 407 that they, the government here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're stopping that at Simcoe Street in Oshawa, when the promise was made during the—

Hon. Brad Duguid: You just want to sell it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Durham, go ahead.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, the Minister of Energy is saying that they want to sell it. You never know. You can't trust them, see? That's what I heard him say.

I'm afraid that they might, in desperation, try to sell a long-term lease of Niagara Falls. Imagine the honeymoon couple, to say, "Look, you're now in a little piece of Spain," or whoever they sell it to. I can't believe the desperation. I sense it over there. I can literally feel it. In my 15 years here—I see a government in decline, and I think the leader, the Premier of the province of Ontario, is certainly running scared.

I can't support this bill.

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in this debate once again, on Bill 135, and I thought it might be a good idea to start with the name of the bill, just to bring us back to some sense of what this discussion is about. It's the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. Ontario's economy is emerging from a global recession, and in order to lessen the impact of this economic downturn, which is global, and the impact it has had on Ontario businesses and families, the McGuinty government has taken action. We've listened carefully to what matters most to the people of Ontario, and we've invested in their priorities, their priorities of health care, education and energy.

Using our Open Ontario plan, we're creating new opportunities for jobs and for economic growth. The fall budget bill moves forward with that plan, and it protects the progress Ontarians have made in our schools and in our hospitals, and we eliminate the deficit caused by the global recession. Working together, we'll continue to create jobs in the short term, and of course, lay the foundation for long-term growth.

As a result of the changes we've made since 2003, our economy has created over 457,000 new jobs. Since the recessionary low in May 2009, Ontario employment has increased by over 217,000 net jobs, regaining 87% of the jobs lost during the recession. That's worth repeating. We've regained 87% of the jobs lost during the recession, and thanks to our government, Ontarians are receiving significant tax relief in the form of targeted tax credits, a reduction in income tax for nine out of 10 people in Ontario.

Over the past seven years, our government has been working to improve the lives of the people of Ontario. We were elected to bring change to the province of Ontario, change from the previous years of neglect to our public services, to our infrastructure, that our families and our economy rely on. We followed through on important legislation to make improvements for Ontario families and businesses and to ensure that we're managing Ontario's finances wisely and responsibly. As a result, our schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, roads and bridges have all been significantly improved.

While these measures are aimed at stimulating the economy and helping to secure Ontario's future over the long term, families and businesses are struggling right now. They're struggling now with higher costs, and they need some help today. That's exactly why the McGuinty government is offering several new tax credits that help put money into people's pockets. These include the children's activity tax credit, the enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit, and the northern energy credit.

Bill 135, if passed, would provide Ontarians with a new credit, the Ontario clean energy benefit, or the OCEB, which would provide the people of Ontario with significant relief on their electricity costs.

Electricity bills are rising because of the new investments required to ensure that Ontario has a clean, modern and reliable system. The proposed OCEB would reduce electricity bills, including tax, for eligible consumers by 10%, helping more than four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms. I'll just repeat that: That's reducing electricity bills by 10%. Ten per cent is the equivalent of \$14 million of savings annually for low-income families in Ontario, and this is an estimate by the Social Housing Services Corp.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Who wouldn't vote for that?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Exactly.

The OCEB for a typical residential consumer would be a savings of more than \$150 a year. A typical small business, using 10,000 kilowatt hours per month, would save more than \$1,700 a year, and a farm using 12,000

kilowatt hours per month would save more than \$2,000 a year.

The OCEB would apply each and every month for the next five years. I'll reiterate that because we heard that from the third party—there was a misconception there, and I will just make it clear, on the record, that the OCEB would apply each and every month for the next five years.

I also want to say, as the Progressive Conservatives and—

Interjections.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: The member from Durham has a whole lot to say, Speaker; I know you can hear him.

The official opposition had a complaint about the process. I sat on that committee and I would just say that if the Progressive Conservatives want to be part of the process, they had that opportunity and, in fact, did not submit one amendment.

After the OCEB was presented in the 2010 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, the people of Ontario have expressed their enthusiastic support.

Jo-Anne Poirier from Ottawa Community Housing had this to say: "A 10% reduction to our hydro costs would save approximately \$750,000 per year. Not only would this benefit our tenants who pay their utility costs directly, but the savings to Ottawa Community Housing could be reinvested in our housing stock. This would enhance the quality of life for our tenants and further protect our assets"—enhancing the quality of life and protecting assets.

The Electricity Distributors Association is also very supportive of the proposed OCEB, and they had this to say: "The benefit provides some financial relief to our customers while ensuring they will continue to benefit from the important infrastructure investments that are being made to ensure service reliability to all Ontarians now and into the future."

To pave the way for a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that includes renewables and creates jobs, our government has made significant investments, but these necessary investments come with a price. Providing the 10% OCEB to Ontarians is a responsible way of helping Ontario families through the transition to a cleaner electricity system. Ontarians can now rest assured that the days of an unreliable and dirty electricity system under the previous government are over.

While the former government made little investment in new electricity supply and transmission, our government has made the long-overdue investments in electricity system infrastructure to ensure the lights stay on.

Our government's long-term energy plan, phasing out coal-fired generation and replacing it with cleaner generation, is improving the quality of the air we breathe and reducing health care costs. It's also attracting new investments and creating jobs.

Bill 135 also moves forward our plans to modernize financial regulation by protecting consumers and investments, by strengthening regulatory requirements and by adopting flexible and effective regulatory measures which are in step with global development.

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Our government is proposing important amendments to the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the Ontario Securities Commission, or the OSC, to develop and implement a robust regulatory framework for over-the-counter derivatives. These proposed changes are designed to prepare the OSC for its transition to a new Canadian securities regulator and also to help Canada achieve its commitments for international financial reform. In updating the regulation, our government is being consistent with the proposed federal Canadian Securities Act.

We're cognizant of the need to promote stability in the Canadian capital markets during this important transition period. Through the proposed amendments, the Ontario government would provide regulatory leadership, promote fair and efficient capital markets, enhance investor protection and help Canada deliver on its G20 financial reform commitments. This is the right plan at the right time. These reforms would enable the province to modernize financial regulation by strengthening regulatory requirements, adopting flexible and effective global regulatory measures and promoting Ontario as an open and safe market for investors. They would help promote Ontario as a well-regulated and a world-class financial market.

As a result of the global recession, Ontario, like many other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, has a fiscal deficit. Our government has laid out a realistic, responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest point and to eliminate it in eight years. We are on track for a deficit of \$18.7 billion in 2010-11. This is a \$1-billion improvement over the 2010 budget projection. It's almost 25% lower than the \$24.7-billion deficit projected one year ago. The improvement to the fiscal forecast for 2010-11 is due mainly to an increase in revenue resulting from stronger economic growth and, of course, our government's prudent fiscal management.

Our government remains committed to ongoing expenditure management and has an extensive track record of effectively realizing savings and efficiencies. Our comprehensive review of all government programs and services has identified more than \$260 million in potential savings through both programming and administrative expenditure reductions. Our government has also negotiated the principal terms of the proposed agreement to renew its long-standing business partnership with Teranet.

Teranet was first formed in 1991 as a partnership between the province of Ontario and the private sector to create an electronic land registration system. Under this proposed agreement, Teranet's owners, Borealis Infrastructure, would provide the province with an upfront payment of \$1 billion, which would be used to reduce the province's debt. This debt reduction would decrease Ontario's ongoing borrowing requirements and would save up to \$50 million in annual interest costs. Our government is committed to maximizing the value of government-owned assets while at the same time protecting consumers.

There are clear signs that the Ontario economy is recovering. Our government is on track to meet the medium-term fiscal targets outlined in the 2010 budget. Key indicators have improved from lows posted during the recession. After declining for four consecutive quarters during the recession in 2008-09, Ontario's real GDP has increased for the last four consecutive quarters, rising 3.7%.

To achieve our fiscal targets while protecting public services, our government is managing responsibly and reducing spending. Since taking office, we've reduced consulting expenses by 50% and travel expenses by 26%. We've taken action to restrain compensation in the OPS and the broader public service, helping to redirect about \$2 billion toward sustaining public services over two years. We're leading by example, having extended the pay freeze for members of provincial Parliament to three years from one. We're on track to reduce the size of the Ontario public service by 5% by March 31, 2011.

Ontario has regained 87% of the jobs that were lost during the global recession. That is amazing.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: How many?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Eighty-seven per cent.

Since May 2009, job growth in Ontario has been stronger than in most provinces and significantly above that of the United States as a whole and, of course, most of the US states. While Ontario is a bright spot in an otherwise weak job picture in Canada and in the United States, we're mindful that economic growth is projected to be slower in the coming years, mainly due to slow growth in the US economy. That's why our government continues to allow for new investments that will continue to help grow the economy and new investments that, of course, will continue to create jobs.

The Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act is part of our plan to help keep Ontario moving forward. Bill 135 also includes significant relief and support for Ontario families, and significant relief and support for Ontario businesses. We've listened to the people of Ontario. We've heard what the people have to say. They've told us what they need, when they need it, and this bill will do that for them.

For that reason and for all the reasons I've outlined, I would encourage the House to support Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, has moved third reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I've been handed a deferral slip. Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters, will be deferred until deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2010, on the motion for second reading Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am happy to resume the debate on Bill 140. This will not be a walk in the park for service managers. It is truly shocking to me that the government wasn't able to complete the task themselves, so they just passed it on. That says a lot about how tired this government has become. This smacks of a tired government, a government out of ideas.

What happened to their creative plan that was going to take advantage of creative financial options? Oh, wait a minute. There's no money. There can't be any creative financial options. This government has dug Ontario so deep into this hole that they can't be creative financially because they have the largest debt in Ontario's history.

Just a couple of weeks ago this government released their fall economic statement. Ontarians were given the grim news that despite four quarters of consecutive economic growth, this government has only reduced the deficit by a mere 3%, from \$19.3 billion in 2009 to a projected \$18.7 billion this year. Ontarian's astronomical 2010 deficit is projected to be \$18.7 billion. The deficits of every other province combined would only equal \$12.4 billion, leaving Ontario's 2010 deficit \$6.3 billion greater than the rest of Canada combined. By comparison, the 2010 deficit for Quebec is \$4.5 billion; for British Columbia, it is \$1.4 billion. Ontarians have to suffer through an \$18.7-billion deficit.

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This government has no excuses. They had three years to put together an affordable housing plan, and they had three years to do the cost calculations and set aside some much-needed funding for affordable housing. They just didn't do it.

Under this government, Ontario has fallen, and fallen hard. The poorest and most vulnerable have fallen the hardest. As the members opposite know, under their watch, we have become a have-not province, expecting handouts from other provinces.

This government has had a real opportunity to make a difference, and they should have done it with this long-term affordable housing strategy, given the economic downturn and the many job losses. Of all the times that Ontarians needed assistance with respect to affordable

housing, the need has never been greater. This government has once again failed, and failed miserably. They didn't capitalize on this opportunity by any stretch of the imagination. They haven't provided for Ontarians who are on the social housing waiting list. There are almost 142,000 of these folks. They haven't given them one bit of help with this long-term affordable housing report or with the legislation that accompanied it. Neither their report nor this legislation will make a difference to eliminate or even reduce the housing waiting list.

This government has, however, put a lot of time and thought into new taxes and fees, and we all, as Ontarians, have to pay them. Let me tell you: They have repealed the corporate income tax cuts; they've cancelled scheduled personal income tax cuts; they've repealed the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; they've raised tobacco taxes; they've delisted eye examinations, chiropractic and physiotherapy services from OHIP; they brought in the Ontario health premium; they brought in the Toronto land transfer tax, the Toronto vehicle registration fees, and their latest hit to the wallet, the harmonized sales tax, the beloved HST; as well, Ontario tire stewardship fees, eco fees, and the municipal hazardous or special waste program, the electronics tax—and this list can go on and on and on.

Even with all those additional taxes and fees, this government could not put aside a little bit of funding for affordable housing.

Let's not forget that this government has had a hand in getting Ontarians to where we are today. Let me talk a bit about Ontario's unemployment rate. At present, it stands at about 8.6%. That is higher than the national average in Canada, which is 7.9%. It's higher than that of Russia, which is 6.6%, of South Korea at 3.7%, and of Argentina at 7.6%. How about Brazil at 6.2% or Mexico at 5.7%? And that list goes on and on.

This government blames Ontario's job situation on the global economic downturn. How many times have we heard that? Yet Ontario's unemployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every single month since January 2007—almost two full years before we saw the financial crisis. Even prior to the economic collapse, Ontario had lost a net 208,000 manufacturing jobs. In effect, Ontario has acted as a ball and chain on Canada's wealth creation for the last three and a half years. Ontario lost a net 141,000 jobs last year alone. Last summer, Ontario's unemployment rate hit a 16-year high. Under this government, Ontario has lost 295,000 manufacturing jobs. That's a decline of 28%.

Additionally, since 2005, Ontario's population has grown by 500,000 people. That means that the provincial economy must add at least 100,000 jobs per year, on average, just to keep up with the immigration population growth. These figures are very alarming. Ontarians are struggling, and yet this government has done nothing to help those in need by providing some new affordable housing options.

Ontario is moving at a snail's pace in recovering from the recession in comparison to other jurisdictions. In the

five years preceding the recession, from 2003 to 2008, the standard of living grew at a slower pace in Ontario than anywhere else in Canada. In the five years preceding the recession, we should have been higher. Ontario has a lower standard of living than California, than Illinois, than Ohio, than Indiana, than Michigan—and we could keep going on and on with that list, too. Under this government, Ontario's provincial wealth, the real GDP, has grown at a slower rate than anywhere outside the Atlantic provinces. I want to point out that during the previous Ontario PC government's tenure in office, Ontario led all of North America in wealth creation.

Many Ontarians do not need long-term housing assistance. Many just need a little assistance until they get back up on their feet—assistance like a housing benefit. This government is more than aware of the benefits of a housing benefit, and they even go as far as to make mention of it under their Building Foundations: Building Futures report. Let me quote to you from that report: "During consultations, some of our partners proposed creating an Ontario housing benefit to help low-income Ontarians pay rent. Current financial challenges do not allow to us proceed to implement such a program at this time."

Well, what kind of cost calculation has this government done to determine the cost of not having a housing benefit? Poor housing is directly linked to poor health. Has this government taken that into consideration? We all know that our current health care system is stretched to the max under this government as well.

Housing benefits seem to work in other jurisdictions. The province of British Columbia, for example, has a program. Their program has about 15,000 seniors enrolled and about 5,000 families. The total cost is about \$45 million. The province of Manitoba has about 2,000 seniors enrolled and about 1,000 families. Their cost is about \$3.2 million. Now Quebec, which is considered to be sort of the gold standard with respect to a housing benefit program, has about 129,000 seniors and families enrolled. The total annual budget is about \$90 million. This government spent, let me tell you, \$185 million on their failed rental opportunities for Ontario families program, more commonly known as ROOF. Just think what that money could have done, had it been used properly.

Let's not forget the monies that this government has wasted with their failed energy experiments and their \$1-billion eHealth scandal. One billion dollars of waste and we still don't have electronic health records, and we have no money to put into the housing benefit. This is truly shameful.

Ontarians know about the government's waste. They are more than aware of the \$1-billion eHealth scandal, so the government's woes about not having money for the housing benefit don't fly with Ontarians. Perhaps if this government had not given millions of dollars to their Liberal consultant friends, they would have had some money to put into the housing benefit. Perhaps their Building Foundations: Building Futures report and this

piece of legislation should have had a little footnote saying, “Sorry, Ontario, we choose our Liberal consultant friends”—who already make \$300 an hour—“over providing you with a roof above your head.” There is a difference between being a cash-strapped government because you have successful programs that come with a price tag and being the government that mismanaged Ontarians’ hard-working tax dollars and now there is nothing left.

I want to talk a little bit about the affordable housing plan and what it should look like. Housing is a balance. It really requires a plan with balance. It is not a one-size-fits-all model.

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As I mentioned before, I do give the government credit for somewhat recognizing this and allowing service managers to work with funds as they see fit within the five homelessness programs. The answer to an affordable housing plan isn’t bricks and mortar. The answer isn’t only planning for the building of new affordable housing units. The answer isn’t solely providing a housing benefit or subsidies. It also isn’t providing no assistance at all.

This plan has no commitment to new provincial operating or capital dollars for housing. It merely promises to “engage the federal government.” This is a shot in the dark because, as we already know, the federal government has made it perfectly clear that they are stepping out of the housing business. This isn’t new news.

In 2009, the Ontario Auditor General called on the housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the federal “step-out,” something we are still waiting for. Maybe they will just pass that one on to the service managers as well. They’ve just had seven years to work something out within this plan, and they’ve wasted that time. They have had more than enough input from Ontarians and industry specialists.

Prior to the release of this report, the Housing Network of Ontario released five key tests of success for Ontario’s long-term housing strategy. Let me run through these important tests.

“Test one: Bold targets and sustained funding:

“A long-term affordable housing strategy must ensure an adequate supply of quality, affordable housing for Ontarians, supported by multi-year financial commitments....

“Test two: A solid measuring stick:

“An effective housing strategy requires a solid foundation of accurate evidence about the scale of housing insecurity and homelessness in Ontario and a clear way to measure progress....

“Test three: Accountability:

“Ontario’s long-term affordable housing strategy needs to be kept on track, and the plan must remain accountable to the people it intends to serve....

“Test four: Make housing truly affordable and accessible:

“All Ontarians should be able to access housing they can afford, and supports should be provided to ensure equitable thriving, inclusive communities....

“Test five: Reform housing legislation to build stronger communities....”

Although the Housing Network of Ontario acknowledges that there are some important changes in this plan, they feel that, overall, the plan falls short of the five key tests that they set out.

According to Wellesley Institute, “The Ontario government has put up the scaffolding for a long-term affordable housing strategy, but there’s plenty of unfinished business for Queen’s Park as it seeks to build a truly comprehensive plan to ensure everyone has access to a healthy, affordable home.”

They also say, “Housing experts agreed that a key element of any long-term affordable housing plan for Ontario is specific targets and timelines for new affordable homes, and accountability for results. There is no commitment in the plan released yesterday to fund a single new unit of affordable rental or ownership housing.”

Additionally, the Wellesley Institute says, “While today’s plan devotes a section to ‘accountability’ and a second section to ‘measuring results’, without specific targets and timelines, it is not clear what the Ontario government is promising to be accountable to, and what results it is measuring.”

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario says, “AMO recognizes that good policy and planning can only go so far. New funding is needed. The government does contribute approximately \$450 million annually to affordable housing,” but the need is far greater. “AMO anticipates that as the economy improves, the government will commit to funding their strategy and addressing the growing affordable housing pressures in Ontario with new funding.”

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association says, “While the strategy includes a focus on streamlining some administrative aspects of the rent-g geared-to-income housing system and increased flexibility for both local communities and tenants, it does not address the critical need for increased investment in new development and the ongoing maintenance of existing properties—key public assets that must be protected for future generations.”

The ONPHA says, “We do thank this government for the significant investments in housing it has made in recent years and we recognize that the current economic situation has posed many challenges for them. However, the potential of any strategy cannot be fully realized unless it is properly funded.... We would encourage the government to continue providing even limited funding in this current economic climate and to adopt some of the innovative financing solutions that the community-based housing sector will be proposing.”

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association also had something to say:

“OMSSA believes the shift in perspective towards human services integration throughout the strategy, which speaks of affordable housing being provided ‘in a supportive environment that includes access to jobs, community facilities, and services,’ is consistent and

supportive of the positions it has advocated on behalf of members over the past several years. Moving to client-centered approach to housing over the current program-focused approach, which is restrictive, is also consistent with OMSSA's positions."

They continue on to say, "OMSSA is encouraging the government to consider the negative long-term impacts of not investing additional resources into the housing sector. Ontarians in need of appropriate and affordable housing will continue to be in need without new investment to expand the affordable housing stock in Ontario. The federal government has an equally important role to play and OMSSA will continue to work with municipal and provincial partners to encourage federal action in providing renewed flexible funding and developing the policy framework for a national housing strategy."

Further to my earlier point, this government has failed to produce a full plan. This piece of legislation proposes an amendment to the Planning Act, 1990, to require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. This will be valuable for not only tenants but for homeowners as well. For a tenant, it can offer a more affordable housing option, as a secondary suite is often a basement apartment in a home. For a homeowner, it can offer an additional income to offset their mortgage. Additionally, this can be a benefit for an elderly parent, so they can remain close to family and close to support.

I know that the Ontario Home Builders' Association was certainly happy to see this included in the legislation. They said, "Secondary suites offer a valuable opportunity to create a new supply of affordable housing in both new and existing communities for seniors, students and families."

I also want to make note that the OHBA says, "Secondary suites also present an opportunity to reduce the strain on the health care systems when aging parents can move in with their children to provide them with security, care and privacy" and dignity. Obviously, anything that reduces the overwhelming strain on our health care system is beneficial. Who can argue with that?

It is kind of interesting, though, that poor housing is directly linked to poor health. Since this legislation doesn't set out a plan for Ontario's affordable housing problems to ensure better health for Ontarians, at least allowing secondary units contributes to some health care.

I want to paint a bit of a picture of what we have in Ontario today. Today, we have one in five Ontarians paying more than 50% of their income on rent. The affordable housing advocacy network says that this puts these Ontarians in danger of becoming homeless. That is over 500,000 households paying more than 50% of their income on shelter costs. Ideally, one shouldn't be paying more than 30% of income on shelter costs. However, in Ontario, we have over 1.2 million households paying over 30% of their income on shelter costs. These are not good numbers. These figures are very concerning.

1700

Social housing, which is housing that charges rent geared to income, is a very limited resource. It represents

only 5% of total housing stock in Ontario and 18% of the rental units. As I've already mentioned, the social housing wait-lists in Ontario are long and they are growing. They're growing longer every day. Overall, social housing is slow to respond to long-term need. That is why this plan needed to include some other options.

So let's talk about the wait-list numbers in Ontario. At the beginning of 2010, there were 141,635 households on the municipal waiting list for affordable housing. The number of households looking for assisted housing across Ontario has grown significantly by 12,382 households, and now the number stands at 154,017. That's from January 2009. That's an increase of 9.6% just in one year. In 2004, shortly after this government was elected, the wait-list stood at 126,103. You can do the math. This is quite the increase. And let me be clear: The wait-list continues to grow.

According to Toronto Community Housing, 60,197 households in the city of Toronto are on the active wait-list. This represents 43% of all the active households in the province, even though Toronto represents only 20.6% of the population of Ontario.

Between 2007 and 2009, the active wait-list for social housing grew by 22%. Today, more than 55,000 of the 61,500 total households on the waiting list have requested units. Only about 4,000 households move into housing each year.

The region of Peel has 14,436 households, or 10% of the total active households, on the waiting list for Ontario. As of the December 31, 2009, there were almost 2,000 eligible participants on the waiting list in Halton region.

Earlier this year, the ONPHA's executive director, Sharad Kerur, stated, "While the recession in Ontario appears to be easing, low- and modest-income households continue to struggle when it comes to finding an affordable home.... In the years ahead, unemployment will remain significant and housing affordability problems will likely become an even bigger issue in many Ontario communities."

Harvey Cooper, who is manager of government relations at CHF Canada in the Ontario region, has said, "Accessing a suitable home is out of reach for many average working people in the service industry and manufacturing. Many of these workers will be forced to make tough choices—pay rent they cannot afford or leave their community. This has negative implications for themselves, their families"—especially their children—"and the local economy."

Ontario is in desperate need of change when it comes to the approach to dealing with affordable housing. I mentioned that the government's long-term affordable housing plan doesn't include a housing benefit. I want to elaborate on this government's past attempt at a housing-related income program.

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The ROOF program is what we're going to talk about, and there is currently no housing-related income program to help Ontarians in

need. The flawed and failed rental opportunities for Ontario families program, or ROOF, is considered to be a first attempt to address the need for a housing-related income program. As I mentioned, there really is no hope that a second attempt is on the horizon as the government's long-term affordable housing plan only mentions that an Ontario housing benefit is not an option at this time and that it's due to these current financial challenges.

Several industry experts have spent valuable time and resources composing a proposal for a housing benefit. Sometimes it costs more to do nothing than it does to come up with a good plan. The government is, I am sure, more than familiar with this report, entitled *A Housing Benefit for Ontario*. The government appears to have overlooked the tremendous value that this crucial report by industry experts has for Ontario. This idea for a housing benefit is also one solution for a poverty reduction strategy. This is an idea that is supported by industry organizations like the Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Metcalf Foundation, the Greater Toronto Apartment Association and the Daily Bread Food Bank. The government sort of took a step in this direction with their rental opportunity for Ontario families program; however, as we all know, that program was less than successful, and they ended up having to change it and shift the money to the municipal service managers.

Let me give anyone who isn't familiar with the ROOF program just a little bit of background. The ROOF program was announced first in July 2007. The government allocated \$185 million towards the program, which was designed to provide a housing allowance of \$100 a month to low-income working families who were struggling with housing affordability in our province. Registration in the program began in August 2007; it ended in June 2008.

To be eligible for ROOF, a family needed to meet the following criteria: They had to work and have an earned income of at least \$5,000 and an adjusted family net income of below \$20,000; have one or more dependent children under the age of 18; be a renter household paying more than 30% of income towards their rent; have less than \$10,000 in liquid assets; not be receiving social assistance or other government shelter assistance; be a resident in Ontario; and have appropriate status in Canada.

The eligibility criteria certainly left many Ontarians out. What about all the other Ontarians who were struggling but didn't have a dependent child or didn't fit into one or the other of these categories? On September 15, 2010, the *Toronto Star* revealed that Ontario is quietly—famous for this, doing things quietly—tweaking its ROOF program for low-income families because not enough people signed up for the 2007 initiative. Well, it didn't fit the program. According to the member from Etobicoke Centre, the remaining \$50 million would be spent on a new program that will allow monthly benefits of up to \$300 and serve a broader range of vulnerable people.

Well, why didn't the government learn from the flawed ROOF program and reinstitute a housing benefit that would help all Ontarians in their time of need in this legislation, and put it in the plan as well? I say "time of need" because I want to be clear that just because an individual receives the housing benefit doesn't mean they will receive it indefinitely. Take, for example, a hard-working Ontarian who loses their job, which we have seen a lot under this government, and they may need some temporary assistance to keep up with paying the rent while still allowing them to have the basic necessities of life. But that hard-working individual will eventually get back on their feet, and then they won't need the housing benefit any more.

This is a far better alternative than getting on the current social housing waiting list, waiting for years—in some cases it could be 20 years—and then having to relocate. With a benefit, they can stay in their own home, be in a home that is close to their work or their children's school or whatever the case may be. It offers them so much more. It allows them the comfort and confidence to get back up on their feet, and that's what Ontarians need.

1710

There are vacant units out there right now that someone could be living in with the help of a housing benefit. Rental housing providers in Ontario have empty units all across this province. Members of the FRPO have 22,000 vacant units in Ontario. That is 22,000 units that this government could tap into to create some affordable housing.

This piece of legislation is making changes to the rent-gear-to-income program. Instead of individuals having to declare their income changes as they happen, which often results in immediate rent increases, they will now only have to report once a year. It's a step in the right direction, but a baby step.

As we all know, the current system often acts as a deterrent for individuals to work extra hours, as those extra hours are automatically clawed back from their pay. A system like that never lets these individuals get back on their feet because they can truly never get ahead. The change to the rent-gear-to-income program will allow them now to make their increased income for a year before having to declare it. This gives them time to save and prepare for their rent increase or to be on their own without assistance.

At the same time, one of the first questions I asked was, what happens in cases where an individual's income decreases? I am told that there will be special circumstances to deal with extreme income increases or income decreases, so that an individual wouldn't be forced to wait for the year-reporting process in order to get more rent assistance.

So here we see the government take a baby step, but they haven't really gone far enough.

I think what's happened here is that we have another plan to have a plan. I really think that a lot more was expected from this government's long-term affordable housing plan and also this almost 100 pages of legislation.

Let's not forget that affordable housing was a large part of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, yet another long-anticipated report that lacked any real initiative and is surely sitting somewhere on a shelf collecting dust right now. They'd better make room right next to that report on the shelf, so that the poverty reduction strategy and the long-term affordable housing strategy can sit next to each other, because it sets out to do much of the same things over the long run: a whole lot of nothing.

As the members opposite know, the success of the poverty reduction strategy was basically dependent, again, on federal funding, similar to this piece of legislation and the coinciding report. Again, federal funding is a key component of its success. This is a regular tactic of this government: blame somebody else. However, we see right through it. This government is well aware that the federal government is getting out of the business of housing. How many times does this government need to hear that?

Their report even has a graph showing that the federal government will reduce funding to zero. Take a look at the report. This is just another blame game exercise, so that when this long-term affordable housing report fails, this government can then point fingers again, this time at the federal government, and say, "It was their fault."

It's not like the federal government hasn't given the Ontario government ample notice that the funding will be reduced and eliminated. This government continues to ignore that piece of advice.

It is really unfortunate that this government continues to put so much emphasis on their plans and, then, when released, we all seem to have a feeling of disappointment because the plans don't achieve what they were anticipated to achieve.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my time, this bill was not made available to our stakeholders until almost noon on November 30, almost a full day after it had been introduced. It is almost 100 pages and it is a new bill, so it cannot even really be compared to the previous bill. This, of course, makes it more complex and more time-consuming for everyone to review it, and that includes all of our stakeholders.

It always makes me wonder when a bill is introduced with very little time for it to be reviewed, and the government moves quickly to get it on the table. What's the rush? What is the government trying to slip by? What is being hidden? Is there something hidden here that we don't want anybody to pick up on? It surely isn't that they have suddenly decided that the changes that this bill brings forward are urgent because, otherwise, they would have brought this long-term affordable housing plan and this piece of legislation forward as planned, last spring or even before. There's been ample notice, and there's been a lot of jiggery-pokery.

As I have mentioned a few times now, this bill will not—it will not—get all those that are currently on the waiting list into housing. Whether this bill passes or not, far too many Ontarians will still remain on that wait-list.

I'm sure that, as we continue to debate this bill, our stakeholders will have amendments and suggestions as to

how we can strengthen this bill, what needs to be changed and what needs to be included. I hope the government will listen and not use their overwhelming majority, once again, to rush this legislation without appropriate hearings.

As always, it is my understanding that much detail is still to come in the regulations as well. We will, of course, be watching that, too. We are all too familiar with the fact that this government often introduces legislation that is only ever really completed once the regulations come into effect. The devil is in the detail. This, of course, makes it easier for the government to slip things in without the scrutiny of anyone—not the public, not the opposition.

I think that this just about wraps up my comments for today, but I do want to say that I am happy that we have finally seen the government's plan and the government's bill. I hope that the government is listening closely to the concerns of industry experts who are saying that the plan is incomplete and that there is still much to do.

I hope that they will stop mismanaging Ontario's finances so that we can afford to invest in a valuable program such as a housing benefit that many vulnerable Ontarians need. And I certainly hope that this government is there to support the service managers as they now try to go through the gruelling task of preparing a 10-year housing plan and that this government takes the advice of the Auditor General and prepares their own plan to deal with the federal government's step-out with respect to housing funding.

In our communities, we're only as strong as the most vulnerable amongst us, and I think we have to remember that when we work to put these plans together.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I hope that the government listens to some of the things that we're suggesting.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm delighted to be able to make a couple of comments, first and foremost to say thank you to the member from Burlington, because in the seven years I have spent in this House, I actually think that is the first time that you have talked about housing across the way. I cannot remember a question coming from the leader ever, but I do think one or two may have come from a member in seven years. So it's thrilling to have somebody who's put this on their agenda. This is important.

I wanted to make sure that there was a clear understanding, however, around the service managers. I, too, would like to put a quote on the record. This is from Kira Heineck, who is executive director of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association: "The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, which represents social services staff in municipalities across Ontario, applauds the shift away from a paternalistic approach towards one that respects municipal service managers and reflects the leadership role we've played in our communities for many years."

I know that this is particularly important so that we do get the record straight. I understand, from the member from Burlington, that it is difficult to inhale and exhale on some of these issues. At one point you are concerned about the fact that there is an \$18-billion deficit, but then on the other hand you want us to put more money into social services for housing above the \$430 million—half a billion dollars, almost—that we currently do.

There is no question that there is more that needs to be done, but what we did do was sit down with the people whom this impacts the most, the providers, the people who put people into the different shelters and into the homes. We talked to them extensively in 13 communities across Ontario to try to understand what their issues were and then to reflect it in the bill.

1720

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a great opportunity to be here today; to be able to add my voice to Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts.

This bill is about 85 pages long. It's actually one of the longer bills we've seen in this Legislature in a while; since they rammed through the HST. That said, my colleague from Burlington, our critic for municipal affairs and housing, gave a very fine speech. I think she outlined some of the concerns we have with the bill and other elements where we think it's passable. I want to commend her because, as you know, the MPP from Burlington comes to this Legislature with a vast skill set and experience from her time working in Burlington and at the region of Halton.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm not quite sure why that's getting a rise out of my colleagues opposite, but I guess they understand that there are few people in this Legislature more equipped to talk about municipal affairs and housing than the member from Burlington. She has done a great job. She has worked very hard since her arrival here, and I believe that was the year of 2006.

Interjection: It was 2007.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, 2007. It was just after my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa and I had joined this chamber.

In any event, she has been advocating for our municipalities and for social housing since she has arrived here, much to the chagrin, of course, of the Liberal government, because when she speaks, she speaks forcefully and with a great degree of knowledge on these issues.

So I want to commend her on how she approached Bill 140. The Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to look at this bill and make our determinations.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I too want to commend the member for Burlington for a thoroughgoing survey of the issues before us.

As you may well be aware, there are many people in desperate, dire situations in this province who need social housing. I have talked to people who live in basement apartments that flood; who put their names on waiting lists and know that they will wait many years, if not decades, before they're actually able to get into housing. I talk to people who live in older non-profit housing projects whose incomes, on pensions, have not gone up at the same rate as inflation; who are desperately in need of rent geared to income or rent supplement.

There is no question that people in this province need a comprehensive, thoroughgoing, very strong social housing initiative on the part of this government. Unfortunately, we will not be seeing this out of this bill. The bill addresses some issues that I will touch on in my allocated time but doesn't deal with the larger problem of a gross insufficiency of affordable housing for seniors, for the disabled, for the poor and frankly, in many cases, for those who are trying to get along on minimum wage.

When you look at people's lives, when you examine those things that allow them to live with dignity, allow them to build their relationships with others, one of the anchors of that is affordable, secure, safe housing. Our failure in this province, the failure of the McGuinty government in this province to address that issue is a very, very substantial problem, one that, unfortunately, this bill will only touch in a tangential way.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: There are certain times when you agree with the members opposite. I'm just going to make a comment to the member from Nepean—Carleton, who referred to the member from Burlington, saying that she knows. I agree with her: The member from Burlington knows. She knows that in the seven years we've been here, social housing was never part of their agenda. She also knows that their party, prior to 2003, cancelled the creation of 17,000 units. They declared a moratorium on non-profit social housing. They stated publicly that they wanted to get out of the business of building affordable housing. So, yes, she knows.

She was in municipal government, like I was, when the previous government downloaded, downloaded, downloaded, downloaded. We couldn't even keep up.

Let me tell you a few things that have happened since 2003, when they abandoned social housing by downloading it. We've invested some \$2.5 billion—\$2.5 billion—in social housing. We built 22,000 new units for families, with more than 150,000 repairs to existing units and more than 35,000 rental supplements. Those are the ones she was speaking about who need a little bit of a hand up to get out of the rut.

We did have a federal partner, and they walked away. They totally didn't assume any responsibility. So how easily we forget. But I hope they will come back on board and support us in this legislation to move us forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to thank the members from Etobicoke Centre, Nepean–Carleton, Toronto–Danforth and Northumberland–Quinte West for commenting on my speech.

I have asked questions in this House on housing. You know what happened? There was uproarious laughter on that side of the House. They did not take seriously what I was asking, or they did not take seriously who I was asking the question on behalf of. That was the 142,000 folks on the waiting list. That list, after this report and after this bill is passed with your huge majority, is not going to change.

There is no plan. The plan has been handed off to the service managers in this province. They are the folks that have been charged now with delivering a plan. Do you know why? Because this government is tired, they're out of ideas, and they couldn't come up with a plan. No matter how much advice they received from the very, very, very long consultation process that they had, they could not come up with enough ideas to formulate a plan.

This document that has been tabled is incomplete. It has no funding attached to it. It requires funding from the federal government. It smacks of a tired, unimaginative, out-of-ideas government. No one in this province is going to be helped through this plan, least of all the communities that are charged now with the responsibility of doing this provincial government's work.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead by our critic, Cheri DiNovo, and I will speak a short rotation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Thank you.

The member has the floor.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Madam Speaker and members of the House.

Speaker, as you're well aware and as people in this chamber are well aware, there is an ongoing housing crisis in Ontario. There's a book released this week, *Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins*, that outlines the extent of that housing crisis. I address this so that when we debate this bill, Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts, we will do it in full knowledge of the context, the social and daily reality that people are dealing with in Ontario around housing, because it's only when you understand that larger reality that you can actually orient yourself properly and deal with this bill, address it in a way that the people of Ontario expect us to address it.

1730

Speaker, 1.3 million Ontario households are precariously housed. That is, they pay more than 30% of their income on housing—1.3 million households. That is a huge number of people who on a daily and monthly basis find themselves squeezed hard by the expense of the

housing that they absolutely must have in this country and in this climate. There are 120,000 Ontario families who live in overcrowded housing. As you are well aware, Speaker, and as others here are aware, overcrowding leads to conflict within families; it leads to transmission of contagious disease. In fact, it has always been noted in public health journals as a significant problem when it comes to the transmission of airborne disease. Overcrowding undermines the stability of families. It undermines people's dignity.

Eighty thousand Ontarians live in substandard housing that requires major repairs—80,000. I've had an opportunity from time to time to see some of the housing that people live in that's referred to as substandard: closets; housing where every rainstorm is an occasion for leaks, for damage of property, for anxiety.

There are 140,000 households on affordable housing waiting lists in Ontario, a number that has increased by 10% from 2009 to 2010. I have had some of those families come into my office, families facing financial crisis, families facing internal crises between different members of those households because they don't know how to hold their families together in the face of relentless pressure, financial pressure for housing they can't afford. These are people who know that it will be years, if not decades, before they are offered a place to live that they can afford.

Those realities—1.3 million households in precarious housing, 120,000 families in overcrowded housing, 80,000 in substandard housing, 140,000 households on the waiting list—those are the realities that cry out for real action on housing in this province.

Housing insecurity is rising because energy costs have gone up 50% in the past decade. The failure of this government to invest in a very substantial way in energy conservation and efficiency has driven up the cost of housing, has deepened a social problem that already had substantial depth.

The reality in Ontario is that rents have increased faster than inflation, and income of tenants has stagnated or declined. You know, Speaker, if you have gone and talked to your constituents, to seniors on CPP and old age security, how they've seen virtually no increase in their income and how they come and ask, "Can you do something to deal with pensions?" Or if you deal with injured workers trying to live on WSIB payments, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payments, this year they're getting a 0.5% increase in their payments. If I remember correctly, the guideline rent increase is in the 2% range. Their incomes cannot keep up with inflation and they cannot keep up with increases in rent. Every year that makes it more and more difficult for those who are trying to hold on to their housing.

People on Ontario Works or ODSP are similarly squeezed, some of them in social and affordable housing but many of them trying to make ends meet in the private market, and they can't make ends meet. They are in great, profound difficulty. That's a reality over this past decade. Half of renters do not have enough income to pay

for housing and other necessities such as food, medicine, transportation, education and so on. My guess is that everyone in this chamber who has sat in their constituency office and met with their constituents has dealt with the phone calls and has had to listen to the desperate pleas of those who are squeezed relentlessly by the cost of housing and forced relentlessly to make extraordinarily difficult and unpleasant choices between food and rent, between medicine and rent, between looking after their children and paying their rent. Those are not pleasant choices. Those are very difficult and painful choices, ones that too many Ontarians are having to make.

The authors of the book *Persistent Poverty* spoke to hundreds of people struggling with poverty and insecure housing from across Ontario, people like Jacob, a young man from Toronto, who said at a recent community meeting held by the interfaith coalition on social assistance, “A bachelor apartment costs \$600, maybe \$700 a month in Parkdale. Rooming houses are terrible. People steal your food, mess up the bathroom, get drunk, bring friends home.... How do I pay a high rent on my ODSP of \$1,092 a month? It would be worse if I were on the \$585 from Ontario Works. Am I supposed to steal?”

What does happen when people can't pay their rent and buy food at the same time? You know very well that when people are desperate, when their security is undermined, when they are not eating regularly, they will do things they would not normally want to do. People beg; some people steal.

The failure to address the housing question is one that undermines the well-being of the whole population, not just those who can't get the housing but those who are affected by the fallout from that reality, people like Harry, a middle-aged man from Brantford, who said, “If I can become homeless, there is not another person in the world who can't become homeless. Even people who are wealthy are very close to being in poverty—one death, one broken relationship, one loss of a job. There are not a lot of choices for housing, and it often means living next to people who are smoking ... crack.”

I used to be on Toronto city council and had an opportunity to talk to those who were homeless, who were being appointed to boards of homeless shelters in the city of Toronto. I had the opportunity to talk to a man who had had a very responsible job working for a municipality in southern Ontario as a senior person in a police department. His loss of his relationship led to a number of bad decisions, a number of decisions that forced him out of his job and ultimately onto the street. By the time I had seen him, he'd dealt with his addictions, had put himself back on his feet, and at that time, luckily enough, was able to get some housing and re-establish his life. But I say to you, there are too many people who are really one incident away from losing their homes, losing the foundation for their lives and being thrown into chaos.

I had the opportunity the other night at a social event to talk to a young woman who had been in and out of mental institutions—a very pleasant young woman and a

very lucky young woman because she'd been able to find a spot in a supportive housing residence in my riding. Here's a woman who knew many people in her circumstances who were living on the street, trying to keep warm in shelters at night, struggling with mental illness, trying to hold it all together. Those people, who can be our sisters and our brothers, our sons and daughters, deserve the provision of housing so that no one, through illness, is forced onto the street—not physical illness, not mental illness. The reality in this province is that too many people, through illness and misfortune, are forced onto the street or into grossly inadequate, grossly unaffordable housing. That has to be addressed.

1740

What's the record of this government on housing? This government talks about their historic investments in housing. Well, then, let's look at the history. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised to build 20,000 new affordable housing units in three years. That was in 2003. As of October this year, seven years later, the government has still only funded 15,000 and built 11,500. So they've not even kept the promises from their first term in office. In other words, the McGuinty government has funded about 1,900 units a year, about one fifth of the 10,000 units a year that housing groups say is needed to make a dent in homelessness and underhousing. Now they're standing by while federal funding is reduced.

In 2009, the Auditor General called for the Ontario housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the federal phase-out of funding. That was 2009. The government had notice. It understood that a change was coming about. It understood that that change was going to have a substantial negative impact on the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government still does not have a plan to deal with that phase-out. In fact, operating funds in the budget for housing were cut by \$187 million this year. That was a budget that had been stagnant from 2003. So, in the face of an ongoing and, in fact, developing crisis in housing, little has been done, and most recently, less is being done.

The reality is that, today, in 2010, after seven years of time for the McGuinty government to do something, the housing crisis continues in Ontario. In fact, the housing crisis in Ontario is the worst of any province in Canada. Just to note, the largest province, historically the most powerful, the richest province, has a housing crisis worse than any other province in Canada.

According to the Wellesley Institute, which is one of the most respected sources of information on housing, Ontario has the highest housing costs of any province. In Toronto, one in three households spends 30% or more of their income on housing. That's the worst record among metropolitan areas across Canada. That is a very disturbing and a very difficult reality for the people who live in this city.

High housing costs force individuals and families to choose between paying rents and mortgages or paying for necessities such as food, medicine, energy, child care, transportation, clothing, education—a range of necessities.

According to the Daily Bread Food Bank, high housing costs are the number one reason why visits to food banks in Toronto cracked the one-million mark last year for the first time ever. And more: A record number of Ontarians visited food banks in 2010; 400,000 in the month of March alone. That's a lot of people lining up at food banks, places where people don't want to be, places where people get only a small portion of their food needs addressed.

Ontario also has the worst record among all the provinces in terms of affordable housing investment. Last year, again using Wellesley Institute numbers based on Statistics Canada data, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, only half the provincial average of \$115 per person. On a per capita basis, the government of Saskatchewan spent almost four times as much. Why is it that the province of Saskatchewan spends so much more on housing than Ontario, which has been the powerhouse of Canada's economy? Why is it that we care so much less about our fellow citizens? Why is it that we do so much less to make sure that people are properly housed?

Worse, the government of Ontario has downloaded more affordable housing costs than any other Canadian province. Cash-strapped Ontario municipalities lack the revenues to meet the growing housing needs across the province. Lack of access to affordable housing is an affront to the dignity of Ontarians.

The experience in the 1930s was a sobering one for Canadians. At that time, the provision of support for those who were poor was left to individual municipalities, and we all know the outcome of that approach. Municipalities were pushed to the point of bankruptcy. There was hostility to anyone coming into a municipality looking for support because people knew their municipality was already hard-pressed financially.

Coming out of that experience, Canadians learned that it was senior levels of government that had to address those social issues, that had the fiscal resources, the financial base to actually address those issues, that had the ability to ensure that no one municipality became responsible for dealing with the social issues that all municipalities were struggling with.

In this province of Ontario, that history has been forgotten. Those lessons have been ignored. Right now, after seven years of McGuinty government, the downloading imposed on municipalities for housing continues in full force and effect, meaning that people don't get the housing they need; meaning that municipalities face financial crises that they cannot get out of; meaning, in the end, that Ontarians face a poorer future and a more difficult reality than they should.

Absolutely, there is need for action. Access to safe and secure housing has to be seen as a human right. The lack of affordable housing in Ontario is no less than an assault on the human rights of citizens. That was the conclusion of a 2009 report by the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, after he toured Canada and found that housing rights are being eroded here.

It is of consequence that the social fabric of this province is being damaged, that the lives of people are being

compromised, that this government is not acting as it has a moral responsibility to act in dealing with housing.

This bill, which my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park will address in greater detail, may well have points here and there that are useful, but the larger crisis in housing affordability and provision is not being addressed by this government, and until it does address those issues, people in Ontario will suffer and our society will be much less than it should be.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: The member from Toronto–Danforth is very eloquent. He did forget a few things about those 6% rent increases that his party continued to have year after year after year: the fact that there was no plan put in place; that we went from a \$2,000 investment in 2000 from the previous government, who put a moratorium on all housing, to \$60,000 per unit that we are currently putting toward each unit.

You may think that \$2.5 billion is “crumbs.” I think that was the quote from the member from Parkdale. The people we have helped in those 200,000 units and 35,000 rent supplements don't call that crumbs. They actually call that a home that's been repaired, a place that they can take some pride in and look after.

1750

There's no question that there is more to do, and we will continue to do so, but the fact remains that when you have such a deficit that you have inherited and you look at the times that we've had—I think it's the greatest recession in 80 years—as Mr. Hugh Lawson, the president of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, has indicated, “Today's announcement represents a bold move forward during these harsh economic times. It will preserve and create more affordable housing, assist low-income people and create jobs. It builds on the momentum created by this government with the housing investments it made in last year's budget.” And that was the \$1.2 billion in affordable housing that was referred to as crumbs.

As I indicated, the \$2.5 billion is 200,000 units and 35,000 rent supplements. We also put \$430 million every year into our other programs. So I actually think we're moving forward in a way that, recognizing our difficulties in our times, speaks to the issue, and we're now engaging the people in how we can do a better job on something that we inherited with such a deficit.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member from Toronto–Danforth should be praised and commended for the hard work and genuineness that he puts to this file. We may not agree on much, but I'll tell you, this is a case where I agree that his interest is without question. He did say that Ontario is in a housing crisis, and he's not alone in this. Even the Toronto Star, in the article on December 6—it reads: “A Flurry of Announcements But Little Content.” That's basically what he was saying, and I think it's true, because the Star often reflects much of

what the Liberals say. In this case, it must be true because it's reflecting the Liberal policy. It goes on here to say:

"Poverty reduction plans"—I don't think so—"poured out of Queen's Park so fast last week it was hard to keep up with the paper flow." We call it baloney, but anyway.

"But once all the packaging had been stripped away and the self-congratulatory rhetoric sifted out, there wasn't much left. Welfare rates were still below the poverty line. Healthy food was still out of reach. Affordable housing was still a dream.

"The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of the rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list of the good things Premier Dalton McGuinty had done" or promised to do.

The issue here is, it's all talk. The sad part of it is, they have run out of goals and objectives. This is 18 months. It just gets them past the next election to give you more false promises and platitudes. I am so discouraged. Even I hoped for them at one time, but now even I have lost hope. I think they have lost their way, and I'm so discouraged. They'll have to have public hearings on this bill, I'm sure, during the winter. I'm looking forward to it. This is the most tragic bill I've ever seen. It's—

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Toronto–Danforth speaking for 20 minutes about affordable homes in the province of Ontario. Yes, I agree with him: We have a problem there because the Conservative government neglected this area for many, many years. Also, finally, the Conservative Party in Ottawa has also opted out, not supporting the province of Ontario in this regard.

I listened to many people speaking before us in this area. Yes, we have to pay attention to social housing, because it's important for us to fix the poverty issue in Ontario. That's why we've invested more than \$2.5 billion since we were elected in 2003. We've built more than 22,000 units. We've fixed more than 150,000 across the province. We supplement more than 35,000 units too. So we cannot declare victory. That's why we're bringing this bill forward to be debated in the House: to listen to many people, to give us a hand and give us more ideas and to enhance our ability when we move toward the future, because we want to support all the people who cannot afford any units on their own.

On this side of the House—and I hope the member from Toronto–Danforth agrees with us—we care about the people. We care about the poor people. We care about the people who cannot pay full rent. That's why we're bringing this bill forward. We want to hear from everyone in the Legislature, and we also want to open it up to all the people in the province of Ontario, to listen to their input, because their input is valuable and gives us more ideas to put forward our platform for the future. We have to pay a lot of attention to this area. We have a lot of things to fix in this area. We have to work with all the

people in this area in order to create a brighter future, a place for people to live, not homeless on the street, not able to pay the rent.

So I hope all members of this House will support our strategy and put partisan issues aside and come forward together to create a good strategy for the future.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's great to be able to debate Bill 140 again.

I want to reiterate the comments of my colleague from Durham, who is probably one of the better debaters in this chamber. He has a grasp of the issues—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Masterful.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He, as my colleague from Thornhill says, is masterful. In fact, he's one of the few MPPs who reads each and every piece legislation front to back. In his estimation today, this bill is one of the most tragic pieces of legislation that he has seen in his, I believe now, 15 years as a member of provincial Parliament, representing the people for Durham.

Interjection: Seems longer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As some colleagues say, it seems longer, but I digress.

The sad part, of course, of this piece of legislation is, like the other pieces of legislation in the eve of this government's sitting—we're looking, of course, at the twilight of the mandate; it's getting on. All we hear from members opposite is about something that happened seven years ago, something that happened 10 years ago, something that happened when Bob Rae was Premier or Mike Harris was Premier. They have a real challenge, I just want to say this to my colleague from Toronto–Danforth, actually sticking to the present date. In fact, what I think I'm going to do for some of the members opposite is, when the new year comes upon us, I believe I'm going to send them a calendar to show them that it's actually 2011, not 2003. They've had all of that time—seven and a half years; it'll be soon eight—and my colleague from Toronto–Danforth will know that this government tends to focus on the past and not the present or the future. We'll continue to press them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Etobicoke Centre, Durham, London–Fanshawe and Nepean–Carleton for their comments.

The member from London–Fanshawe said, "We care." I can't tell whether people care or don't care; all I can tell is how they act and whether they address an issue or don't address an issue. If they care, then they didn't address it, and that opens a bunch of questions; if they didn't care and didn't address it, a different set. I don't know whether they care or not; I just know that there's a housing crisis, and the addressing of that crisis by this government falls far short of both what was promised by them in 2003 and what is needed now by the people of this province.

The member from Etobicoke Centre talked about the funds that have been put forward by this government. I

have to say, much like the captain of a ship that goes down with an inadequate number of lifeboats, for those who get in the lifeboats, certainly it's a good thing, but if there are too many people left bobbing in the water, you have a profound problem. We have that. I don't see this government addressing the problem in the way it needs to be addressed.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on December 2 by the Minister of Tourism. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We are here this evening for one simple reason: The Minister of Tourism will not answer our questions on the Niagara Parks Commission. He replies, yes, but his replies are of no relevance to the specific questions we ask. He stands in his place; he speaks; he sticks to his talking points. His message track is his mantra. His soothing words are intended to reassure, but anyone reading Hansard in recent days would have to agree that his replies ignore the substance of the concerns we raise.

1800

One of my responsibilities in this Legislature is my role as official opposition critic to the Minister of Tourism and Culture. It is not my nature to want to criticize the minister personally. It is, however, my job to point out the flaws in the government's policy, speak on behalf of those who are negatively impacted by it, hold the minister to account for his public actions—or, in this case, his lack thereof—and suggest constructive ideas in the public interest.

But let's return to why we're here. The Legislature adjourned at 6 p.m. Debate on the government bill has ended, and yet we are still here waiting for this minister to answer our questions.

In raising these issues and asking for this late show, I mean no personal disrespect to the minister. While I can't say I know him well, he strikes me as a gentleman who would want to serve the people of Ontario with appropriate regard to the standards people would expect of their elected representatives. He's been elected twice to the Legislature by the good people of Markham–Unionville, who chose him ahead of a number of highly qualified candidates. The Premier of Ontario has demonstrated his confidence in the minister by appointing him

to the executive council. But for whatever reason, he is unwilling, unable or unprepared to answer the questions the opposition is raising about the emerging Liberal scandal at the Niagara Parks Commission.

I suspect the minister would like to answer. I suspect that if he had his way, he would be more forthcoming in this House. I suspect that he would want to be truthful in this chamber, but I also suspect that the staff in the Premier's office are standing in the way.

We are now in the eighth year of the McGuinty Liberal government. If an election were held today, the government would be routed from office, and with good reason. There is a growing consensus in Ontario that this government will not change; therefore, there needs to be a change of government.

The problems at the Niagara Parks Commission will not go away under this cabal. After more than seven years in office, the rot has set in, and the rot is theirs. They can't credibly blame this one on their predecessors. As long as they're in office, they will continue to appoint the people they want to appoint to agencies, boards and commissions. It is their right as the governing party. But when they appoint people whose primary qualification is their Liberal Party membership, and when these appointees make mistakes, as they inevitably will, they will appoint more Liberals to clean up Liberal mistakes if given the chance.

Yesterday I was astonished to learn that the minister, having again refused to answer the substance of our questions, used this late show as an excuse. So, having ignored our questions last Thursday, having ignored our questions yesterday, he effectively implied that he would answer them right now. That's the first time I can ever recall a minister refusing to answer questions, of necessity triggering a late show, and then continuing to use the coming late show as an excuse not to answer subsequent questions. It is absolutely absurd, and as the standing orders governing the late show—as the minister should know—do not allow for the kind of exchange that takes place during question period, there is little back and forth. There is no cut and thrust. The rules say that the member asking for the late show gets to speak for five minutes and then the minister or his parliamentary assistant responds for five minutes.

I'm glad the minister is here. He needs to be here. He needs to answer the questions he's avoided thus far.

Our caucus wants to know: Did she try to charge for prep time? Did she pick her own firm with a secret ballot? Did she sole-source the Van Kessel contract? The minister has an obligation to answer, and I'm still waiting for an acceptable answer to the questions I raised this morning. I said that the news media had reported on the expenses of Joel Noden, formerly an executive at the Niagara Parks Commission. I asked, "Did Mr. Noden ever pick up the expenses of any former Ministers of Tourism for meals, hospitality or even a single expense?" And what was the minister's reply? He read from his talking points, and again he tried to implicate our party, even though we've been in opposition for more than seven years.

This House and the people of Ontario expect better and they deserve better. It's time, and I hope that the minister will now answer the questions that have been asked.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Chan: It's a pleasure for me to rise today in the House to discuss the future of the Niagara Parks Commission. The strength of this commission is a vital part of the future of tourism in Niagara and across Ontario.

We recognize the concerns that have been brought forward recently and in the past. That is why, earlier this year, we took a hard look at the commission. We assessed the situation and determined that we needed to chart a new course. We looked at ways in which we can move the commission forward. We looked at ways in which we can bring greater accountability and transparency. We looked at ways in which we can restore public confidence in this very important government agency.

However, there are forces at work that don't want to see the commission move forward. There are forces at work that don't want change at the commission. There are forces at work that want to keep the status quo that they instilled in 1995, in 1998, and in 2001 when the Leader of the Opposition was tourism minister.

The former general manager of the commission from 1995 to 1998 described its functioning as this: backroom deals, botched projects, distorted construction bids and a severe lack of policies and procedures.

As I stand here, I look across the House to see those forces at work. Those forces are the Conservative Party. That is why recent antics of the party come as no surprise. Recently, the Conservatives launched an attack on the very fabric of change at the Niagara Parks Commission. They launched an attack on the new chair of the commission. They led a misinformation campaign—sensational, to say the least. The Conservatives stood in the House Thursday and again yesterday, presenting inaccurate information in an attempt to damage the integrity and credibility of this exceptional individual.

Let's look at what the Conservatives are saying, and let's compare it with the real facts.

They are making false allegations about the hiring of Grant Thornton. Here are the facts. The commission tenders the appointment of external auditors every five years. A request for proposal was issued in August. Responses came in from eight firms, and one was Grant Thornton LLP. When Grant Thornton was mentioned, the chair declared her previous involvement with the firm. The board ruled that it was not a conflict of interest. There was a process in place whereby the applicants were reviewed and evaluated by the selection committee. The recommendations then went before the board, and it was the board that approved Grant Thornton LLP on September 3, 2010.

They are making false allegations about the compensation of the chair and board members.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask you to withdraw the comment about false accusations.

Hon. Michael Chan: Madam Speaker, they are making inaccurate information about the compensation of the chair and board members—and I withdraw that. Thank you.

The fact is this: The chair does not have the authority to increase or decrease the commissioners' pay.

Here is another fact: The chair wants to move board meetings from monthly to bimonthly. This will decrease, not increase, the commissioners' pay.

Why are the Conservatives taking this path? As Chair Fay Booker asked, "Are they afraid of what's going to come out?" Are they afraid that the lack of ability to recollect a letter with concerns is only the beginning of what may come out about the credibility of the Leader of the Opposition?

Beyond these questions lies a moral obligation that must be met tonight. Having these facts now, there needs to be one immediate action that follows. The Conservatives need to apologize for getting the facts wrong on Chair Fay Booker. I am asking the member from Wellington–Halton Hills to apologize to Chair Fay Booker.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe–Grey has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Tourism. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

1810

Mr. Jim Wilson: The culture of rot has spread from eHealth to the OLG, to the LHINs, to the hospitals in eHealth 2.0 and has now made its way to the Niagara Parks Commission.

This tourism minister has chosen to dodge, deflect and deny any responsibility for the culture of rot at the Niagara Parks Commission, but something he can't deny is that he appointed Liberal-friendly Fay Booker to head up the parks commission. He appointed Fay Booker despite warnings by the Ontario PCs about her long-time Liberal ties. When I questioned the minister on his appointment, he used scripted talking points and repeated over and over again that his appointee was to take the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction.

But in which new direction are we seeing the commission going? Despite a government-wide wage freeze for non-union employees, the new direction that Ms. Booker decided to take the commission in was to double her own per diem. Despite rules against sole-source contracts, the direction Ms. Booker decided to take the commission in was to hand a \$50,000 sole-source contract to her friend Peter Van Kessel. Despite rules calling for fair and open contracting practices, the direction Ms. Booker took when appointing a new auditor

wasn't to find the least expensive auditor, and it wasn't to find the auditor that understood the NPC file the best; no, the direction she took was to go with the auditing firm she used to be a partner with.

The minister likes to say he has a plan. Is the McGuinty Liberal plan to ignore procurement rules, to hire a friend on a sole-source contract, to renew that same contract without competition and to tear up a bidding process for an external auditor when friends at the chair's old firm were losing the bid on their merits? That plan sounds a lot like the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

It says a lot about what Premier McGuinty thinks accountability means when he handed out a parliamentary assistant's job to a member who is embroiled in the Niagara Parks Commission mess. A freedom-of-information request found that from May 2004 to July 2007, the member for Niagara Falls golfed 158 times on the parks commission's tab, and he racked up 506 rounds of golf for himself and his friends.

This is a script we've all seen acted out before. Whether it's Liberal friends and insiders getting rich off a billion-dollar boondoggle at eHealth or whether it's untendered contracts handed out at the unelected and unaccountable LHINs, OLG, Cancer Care Ontario or hospitals, it's nothing we haven't seen before.

It's time for this minister to take responsibility for the mess that continues at the Niagara Parks Commission. He says he has a plan, but it's a plan that Ontario families are not buying anymore. Ontario families want change, and each and every day it becomes more and more obvious that the only real change that will happen will be on election day; that is the day Ontario families tell the McGuinty Liberals that we've seen enough of your schemes and so-called plans, and bring real accountability back to government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: The heart of the debate tonight is the future of Niagara region's tourism industry. Along the Niagara River from Fort Erie in the south to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the north, we must maximize the full potential of the region. For that, we must take a collective approach to strengthen the commission.

Successive governments have seen the challenges that lie with the commission—challenges that lie with the long-standing corporate culture and practices in the place. This much is very clear: We need more than partisan games and we need more than baseless attacks; we need decisive action.

Our government made a decision to move ahead earlier this year, to chart a new course for the commission. That's where the appointment of a new chair,

experienced in auditing and governance came in; that's where the appointment of a strong vice-chair came in; that's where changes to governance, code of conduct, approval of expenses and public consultation all came in; and that's where changes to the board and senior management came in.

While we continue to move ahead, there are those who oppose change, namely through these methods—a method based on false claims, a method based on false facts, a method—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind you about that comment.

Hon. Michael Chan: I withdraw that—a method based on inaccurate claims, a method based on inaccurate facts, a method that is inappropriate and unacceptable.

The members on the other side of the House should hold themselves to a higher standard as elected representatives of their communities. The approach they have put on display is shameful.

There is a long-standing corporate culture at the commission. This culture existed when the Leader of the Opposition was tourism minister. When asked about complaints he received during that time, he simply said, "I do not have a recollection."

There is a saying, and I say it to the Leader of the Opposition and the party opposite: "Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored." Facts were ignored during question period Thursday. Facts were ignored during question period Monday. Truth must prevail.

I ask the members to look at the facts that I have outlined. I ask the members to follow reasoning. I ask the member to move forward with rationale. I ask the members to separate myth from fact, because, in reality, these attacks are just a form of opposition to the change that Chair Fay Booker is spearheading. I leave it to the opposition if they want to oppose change, but I ask that this not be done at the cost of an Ontarian who has devoted much of her career to good governance and accountability.

I ask the members who took an active part in this misinformation campaign to apologize to Chair Fay Booker. I ask the following members to apologize: the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of his party, the member from Thornhill, and the member from Nepean-Carleton. At the very least, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and the member from Simcoe-Grey, who have posed questions of the same nature tonight, should apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1817.

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 Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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 Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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 and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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 / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
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 Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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 civiles 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	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge 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 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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill 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) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
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Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
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**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
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Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
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France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**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 / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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