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Monday 16 May 2011

Lundi 16 mai 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 May 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 mai 2011

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce—and thank you for accommodating him in the Speaker's gallery this morning—a good friend of mine, the executive director and president of the Canadian Urban Institute and my former mayor, His Worship Fred Eisenberger. Welcome, Fred.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to introduce Wanda Secord, Lisa Sarsfield and Wendy Hayes, who are from the Durham Children's Aid Society, visiting us here today at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It is my pleasure to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, who are in attendance today, and a special note to Peter Gould, Bill Emmott and all the members of the board. Welcome, and thank you for all of your hard work.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too would like to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, but more importantly—well, not more importantly, but just as importantly—I'd like to recognize two of my constituents, Doug and Gail Puddicombe. They are here today to visit the firefighters' memorial, where a relative of Gail's is recognized for his sacrifice. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park while they were here for such an important visit to Toronto.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would like to welcome to the House two of my constituents who are here for Dairy Farmers of Ontario Day: Dave Murray and Jim Fitzgerald.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's my pleasure to introduce Carina Hochgeschurz and her mom, Colleen. Carina was a page with us in the last session of the Parliament. She enjoyed it so much she's returning to see me again.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted that we are joined today by people from the Hastings county children's aid society. We have youth, staff and members of the board joining us today.

Mr. Steve Clark: I would like to introduce two visitors from Family and Children's Services of Leeds and Grenville: executive director Allan Hogan and board member Tony Barnes.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I too want to welcome people from Sudbury, from the children's aid society: Colette Prévost, the executive director, and Dan Coté, the chair of the board. Welcome to Toronto and enjoy question period.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome to the House today members of the Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County: Daniel Ryan and Arijana Tomicic and youth David.

I would also like to welcome to the House this morning, joining us in the gallery, the Ontario PC summer interns.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would like to introduce to the House this morning my good friend Gisèle Hébert, who's the executive director of the North Bay Parry Sound children's aid society. She's here with Rick Sapinski, who's our board chair.

Also today in the members' gallery I have visiting Claudette Guthrie, who is the mom of my staffer Adrienne Guthrie, who's here with us today as well.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, as you've probably figured out, today is children's aid society lobby day. I am pleased to introduce Paul Zarnke of the Peel Children's Aid Society and Trish Keachie of Dufferin Child and Family Services.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've been asked on behalf of my colleague from Guelph to welcome Kyla Fishburn's father, David Fishburn, and some of her family—Robin Fishburn and Jean Fishburn—Kyla, of course, is one of your pages; and from Willowdale, Frank Blum and Anne Shelton; and from London, Joanne Maddeford, to the Legislature to watch the proceedings.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to welcome to the House today representatives of Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County, as well as acknowledge the presence of members of the Halton Children's Aid Society. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I wonder if you could help me welcome members of the Kingston and Frontenac children's aid society, including board president Brian Devlin, executive director Raymond Muldoon, and Yvonne Cooper, who's the communications coordinator.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome to the House today on their lobby day members from the Lanark children's aid society: Suzanne Geoffrion and Melissa Hillier.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I would like to welcome the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, along with all of the children's aid societies who are here today and many youth who have joined us from around the

province at Queen's Park today, including Mary Ballantyne, the executive director, and Donna Denny, the past president. Many of them will be meeting with MPPs here today, and I know that our members are very much looking forward to those meetings. Welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to welcome, from family youth and child services of Muskoka, whom I just had a very productive meeting with, executive director Marty Rutledge, Jennifer Scott, Anthony Weiler and Christopher Finlay here to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I would like my colleagues to join me in welcoming folks from the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, they being Bill Bevan, executive director; Shane Renaud, board president; Norman King, the past president; Jamie Henderson—a good friend of my friend Gerry Phillips—a member of the board; Linda Goodhew, director of children's resources; and Jemima Manayah. Welcome.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today John Phair, a councillor from the township of Enniskillen and also a reporter with Ontario Farmer, who will be joining us shortly.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: It's a pleasure to introduce and welcome visitors from the far east: Raymond Lemay, CEO; and Jean Dugas, chair of the board of Valoris Service for children and adults of Prescott-Russell, and also Jean-Louis Diamond of the Hawkesbury employment office. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome to the House today members of the York region children's aid society: President Tammy Ward; immediate past president, the Rev. M.J. Perry; committee member Maddie Di Muccio; executive director Patrick Lake, and communications director Jennifer Grant. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais présenter à l'Assemblée la directrice générale de la société d'aide à l'enfance, M^{me} Colette Prévost, ainsi que le président du conseil, M. Daniel Coté.

It's my pleasure to introduce to the House the president and executive director of the Sudbury children's aid society, Daniel Coté and Colette Prévost.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to welcome, from Kitchener-Waterloo family and children's services, the president, Mr. Royston Simon, and Karen.

1040

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure this morning to introduce the executive director and members of the board of the Ottawa children's aid society. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the ambassador of the state of Kuwait to Canada, His Excellency Ali Al-Sammak. Please join me in welcoming our guest to the Legislature today. Your Excellency, welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to welcome, from Family and Children's Services of St. Thomas and Elgin, executive director Rod Potgieter; board members Jennifer Paul-O'Donnell, Cheryl Fish and Don Lawrence; and youth in transition workers Tabitha MacArthur and

Kelsie Hitchen. They are joined by three youths: Helen, Matthew and Hailey. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Also seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning is a group of individuals whom I'd like to introduce: John Hergott; Bruce MacKay; Patrick Croley; Phil Reid; Anne Reid; Erica Beck; Judy Anderson; Neil Anderson; Bill Davidson; Father Yves Fournier; my nephew Nicholas Peters; and the one and only Joe Peters, my brother. Maybe at some point down the road, he may move back to Elgin county. Who knows?

As well, on behalf of the member from Kenora-Rainy River and page Jonathan Hampton, I welcome to the Speaker's gallery today Jonathan's grandparents, Elie and Gay Martel—Elie as well being a former member of this chamber. Welcome back to Queen's Park today. It's my understanding as well that Jonathan's mother, Shelley, another former member, will be joining us through the day today at the Legislature. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Christian Gill and the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we'd like to welcome mother, Anne Gill, and father, Ken Gill, to the Legislature today.

I also take this opportunity to wish my executive assistant, Maggie Head, a happy birthday today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Energy: There are two things guaranteed under a McGuinty Liberal government—hydro bills will skyrocket and you'll increase taxes. I want to give Ontario families relief from skyrocketing hydro bills, which is why an Ontario PC government will end the Premier's sweetheart deal with Samsung that is driving up bills across this province.

Minister, last week you said that there was a substantial penalty if the deal were ended. In fact, you said that you personally would make that clear and give numbers to the public by the end of the day Tuesday. You did not deliver. Your infrastructure minister then came out the next day and admitted that you had no numbers.

Why don't you come clean? Exactly what kind of penalty clause do you claim that you put in your sweetheart deal with Samsung?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Last week, the Leader of the Opposition made what I think is very obviously a rookie mistake when he announced his reckless energy policy. His energy policy will destroy our efforts to build a globe-leading clean energy economy and it will kill thousands of clean energy jobs.

Ontario families are now getting a glimpse of what that leader is all about, and they don't like it. Even his own caucus members are lining up against him. First, we had the member for Oxford backpedalling within hours

of his leader's announcement last week. This weekend, we learned of another caucus member at odds with his own leader's reckless energy policy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Withdraw.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member for Newmarket–Aurora now sits on a board of a clean energy company that his leader's energy policy wants to hammer. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition can explain that one to—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister: The Ontario PC team caucus and candidates believe—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Ministers will please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Ontario PC caucus candidates are united in opposing your sweetheart deal that is driving up hydro bills and causing them to skyrocket across the province. Minister, you know this: Skyrocketing hydro bills hurt families and they kill jobs, and your sweetheart Samsung deal is going to drive rates even higher.

You keep defending it, and you say that you want to keep the details of this sweetheart deal a secret from the general public. In January 2010, you simply had a fancy photo op for a framework agreement to begin four years of contract talks for power down the road.

There is time to cut our losses and the sweetheart deal. Minister, back up your claims. Make what you claim is—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think it's pretty obvious that the Leader of the Opposition's launch of his energy plan last week has not gone well. Families reject his plan to tear down all we've built and to kiss away billions of dollars of investment in thousands of clean energy jobs.

Ontario families want clean energy and the jobs that we're creating, so I find it just a little ironic that the Leader of the Opposition has a plan to destroy our clean energy economy while a member of his own caucus is sitting on the board of directors of a company that's trying to participate in the clean energy economy that his plan is going to absolutely hammer.

Does the leader not see the fact as well that the member for Oxford jumped offside within hours of his plan coming up, because the member for Oxford is concerned for the 900 jobs that his leader wants to kill? It's very obvious that the—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, you actually signed this sweetheart framework deal with Samsung. It's your signature on that bill. But you failed to back up your claim of a substantial monetary penalty. This tells us that there is no such thing. If it were true, the minister would make

it open to the public so that they could see the details of the sweetheart deal that you signed.

I don't know what world you live in, but families are tired of your skyrocketing hydro bills. They want to see change, they want to see relief and they want to see an Ontario PC government that will give families relief on their taxes and skyrocketing hydro bills.

Minister, I'll ask you this time: Will you please make this so-called substantial monetary penalty public today? You said you would last Tuesday; we don't think you actually have it. Won't you come clean?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What this province needs is leadership that wants to build this province up, not tear this province down; build up our clean energy economy, not tear it apart; create thousands of clean energy jobs, not kill those jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Halton. The member from Lanark. The Minister of Infrastructure. We have a lot of guests who are joining us here in the chamber, and I'm sure they all want to hear the questions and the answers.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We have such leadership in the Premier we have in this province today. And where's the Premier today? He's in Windsor. He's visiting CS Wind, where 700 direct and indirect jobs are being created— jobs that our policies support and your policies want to kill. Later on, he'll be visiting Canadian Solar in Guelph; 500 jobs are being created there, 500 jobs in Guelph that you want to take away from the good people of Guelph. Our Premier is there because he's the leader—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Energy: Quite frankly, nobody believes the McGuinty Liberals' phoney job claims anymore. You claimed here in the House 800 jobs in Sarnia, Ontario; it turns out there are only—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of the Environment, Minister of Agriculture, government House leader, please come to order.

Please continue.

1050

Mr. Tim Hudak: You claimed that there were 800 jobs created in Sarnia. It turns out that there are only eight, including a security guy and somebody who mows the lawn.

Nobody believes your claims anymore. In fact, what you don't understand is that skyrocketing hydro bills hurt Ontario families and they kill jobs; 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost under the McGuinty government from higher taxes and higher hydro rates. That's why Ontario families want to see change to get relief on hydro bills.

I'll ask you one more time, Minister. You're bound and determined to drive up hydro bills even more. Why won't you release the terms of this—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: This Leader of the Opposition refuses to take my word for the fact that 13,000 jobs, indeed, were created as a result of our Green Energy Act last year, so maybe he'll take the word of workers directly.

Misty Oakley is a Siliken employee with three young children. Miss Oakley was on social assistance before securing a job at the solar manufacturing plant. She said that employment with Siliken means security and a good future for her and her family. Why does the Leader of the Opposition want to take her good future away? Why does the Leader of the Opposition want to take her job away? Why does he want to insult her by suggesting that she doesn't even exist?

Come on out into the rest of Ontario. Join us in meeting the thousands of clean energy workers who are benefiting from our clean energy economy. Get out of your bubble here at Queen's Park. Get out there—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Talk about somebody living in a bubble, Mr. Speaker. These guys are so out of touch, they don't know that hydro rates hurt families and kill jobs when they skyrocket under the McGuinty Liberal government.

Let's cut through the chaff, let's cut through all of your bluster, Minister, and just come clean. We want you to release the terms of the framework agreement that you yourself signed with Samsung—the same deal that's going to drive up hydro rates even more for struggling seniors, families and small businesses. You claim that there's a substantial monetary penalty in this agreement that you signed. If that's the case, put it on the floor of the Legislature and let Ontario families decide whether this deal is worth higher and higher hydro rates.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our efforts to build a clean energy economy have put thousands of people across this province back to work, but the Leader of the Opposition stands opposed to this recovery. He stands opposed to the thousands of Ontarians who were previously unemployed but now have found work in our clean energy economy.

I want you to hear a quote from Ian Karleff from AS Solar. This is what he had to say: "The FIT and microFIT programs have been fantastic creators of jobs. AS Solar has created 14 brand new jobs. We were able to find highly skilled employees with lengthy logistics background all laid off in the past few years from the automotive sector."

We're putting Ontarians back to work. The last thing they need is a Leader of the Opposition who wants to put them back on the unemployment line, and that's what his clean energy plan would do.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister in his bubble simply does not understand that skyrocketing hydro bills hurt hard-working families. They've killed jobs in our province. We've lost some 300,000 manufacturing jobs under the McGuinty Liberals with higher taxes and skyrocketing hydro bills. I don't even know if this minister has even read the deal that he signed. I have no idea if this minister has signed the framework agreement. He boasted last week that there was a substantial monetary penalty. He said that he would make it public. He has failed to do so.

Minister, did you even read the deal that you signed? How much exactly are you going to drive up hydro bills to fulfill this sweetheart deal with a foreign multinational corporation? Won't you please come clean and put the terms before the assembly? What are you trying to hide?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Last week, the Leader of the Opposition made a huge mistake by introducing a reckless energy policy that's going to put thousands of people out of work. If he doesn't take my word for it, take the word of the hundreds of people who are now writing in to us with concerns about where he wants to take this province.

Let me quote Jim Cummings from Clearly Solar: "Your government showed tremendous leadership with the introduction of the Green Energy Act and the FIT programs. My company is living proof that this initiative is creating jobs. In one short year, we've hired over 15 people."

He went on to say, "Mr. Hudak announced that if elected, he would kill the entire FIT program and all the jobs that go with it. This is the kind of simplistic nonsense that could kill our industry."

We, on this side of the House, agree with Jim Cummings.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. On Friday, the Information and Privacy Commissioner launched an investigation into the handling of freedom-of-information requests by the Minister of Finance. Will this government be reviewing their practices, or do they still plan to pretend that everything is fine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me say, first of all, that we are very happy to work with the office of the privacy commissioner. We're very confident that all the processes that needed to be followed were followed.

I know that this House has heard the Premier and the Minister of Finance talk about the compliance rate that is in place under our government: 86% for 2010. That is a compliance rate, in terms of responding to these requests, that stands in stark contrast to previous governments—PCs at 57% and NDP at 50%. An 86% compliance rate—which indicates we want people to have information.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people who make this province work every day are the people whom we all

work for. The government and government documents aren't the private property of the Liberal Party.

Last week, we learned that political staff were trying to block the release of audits and block information about the government's unfair tax scheme. Why won't the government admit that they have a secrecy habit, one that they need to quit right away?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because that's just not true. It's just not true that we don't want people to have information. The member has omitted to mention that for that request, all of that information was transferred to the Ministry of Tourism, where it rightly needed to be. That's what I mean when I say that all of the processes that needed to be followed were followed. We are very committed to accountability.

I think the member opposite knows that we are interested in making sure that people have the information that they need. But the member opposite also knows that there are procedures. We follow the procedures, and we will work with the privacy commissioner as she does her review.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the minister knows that the Minister of Finance's political staff actually tried to get documents blocked from being released. Those are the facts.

Today in Windsor, the Premier will tout the benefits of a contract that he signed on behalf of the people of Ontario that he refuses to make public, just like we're not allowed to know how much families are on the hook for to TransCanada for the cancelled gas plant in Oakville.

Why does this government believe that they can make multi-billion-dollar commitments without showing Ontario families the fine print?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We don't believe that. We believe that information that is generated by the government needs to be available to people, which is why we have complied 86% of the time in the time frame that it's needed—much better than previous governments. We're very committed to accountability. In fact, we've tightened rules around accountability. Ministries are very clear that they have a responsibility to follow the rules, to disclose information.

In the case that the member is talking about, the information was transferred to the Ministry of Tourism, which is where it should have been in the first place.

The member opposite knows that we are following the rules. We will work with the privacy commissioner to make sure that people who ask for information from the government get it in a timely manner.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. In 1998, a member of this Legislature declared, "We're buying a pig in a poke.... The public has a billion and a half of their tax dollars into this thing, but they're going to have no right to look at the document

that outlines the deal...." That was the chair of cabinet speaking about the 407 contract.

Will the Acting Premier explain why that contract was made public but this one isn't?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I will say is, as I have said, we are very committed to making sure that people have the information that they need. What we're not going to do is, we're not going to compromise commercial dealings at the moment when they are the most sensitive. But as information can be revealed, we will make sure that people have the information that they need, which is what we have done. That is our record. We will continue to provide information as people request it.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has insisted that this deal will lead to jobs and investment, but people can't see if there is any guarantee of jobs because that part of the contract is secret—just like the Premier insists that cancelling the private plant in Oakville won't cost a thing, while hiding the contract details that could prove him wrong.

Can the government show the people of Ontario the job guarantees in black and white, or are they asking us to buy a pig in a poke?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we can show the people of Ontario is the jobs that are being created all over the province: the jobs in Windsor, the jobs in Tillsonburg, the jobs in Don Mills, the jobs in Burlington, Fort Erie, Guelph, Woodbridge, London, Oakville and Hamilton. This economy in Ontario is turning a corner, and it's turning a corner in large part because of the partnerships that we have put in place with the private sector, the investments that we have made in green energy, and the framework that we've put in place that is encouraging industry to come to Ontario. That is what we will show the people of Ontario. We are very pleased that that process is in place, because that's what people need in the province, in Hamilton and in Niagara. People need jobs. That's what we're producing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the people of Ontario have heard promises before. In 2002, the Premier promised to roll back rates on the 407. We're paying more than ever.

People deserve the facts. When will this government start making these contracts public so that families know the facts and not just promises from a government that has let them down far too many times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When we came to office, we challenged the contract that the previous government had put in place on the 407. We were not able to overturn that contract, but we are extending the 407 and the province is going to own and operate the 407. Had that previous government not put that contract in place, we would have been able to build the 407 extension by now.

The member opposite knows full well that we are coming out of an economic downturn. We are working

very hard in this province to create jobs, and the fact is, those jobs exist. Those jobs exist across the province: 700 jobs in Windsor, 300 jobs in Don Mills, 60 jobs in Welland, 150 jobs in Burlington and 225 jobs in Fort Erie. We will continue to put the framework in place to encourage industry to come here, because that's what the people of Ontario—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the Minister of Energy: The Ontario PC leader believes that renewable energy must be part of Ontario's power supply mix. Premier McGuinty only believes that it must be part of the supply mix if it is expensive. He has already driven away 300,000 manufacturing jobs by driving up hydro rates, which are now up 150% for everyone on time-of-use pricing. Now he tells Ontario families that they will have to pay 46% more on hydro bills, which he will spend on his expensive energy experiments.

Minister, where is the cabinet on this, and why can't you get him to understand that he's still on the same path that leads to his legacy of 300,000 killed jobs in manufacturing in this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the member opposite doesn't want to admit it, because it'll kill his story, but the fact is, the Ontario Energy Board reported last month that, indeed, rates are flat year over year as a result of our clean energy benefit—something that that party fails to support. If we were to go in the direction of his leader, that means an instant 10% increase on bills, because that's part of their plan.

I think it's not often that the Leader of the Opposition says something that makes sense, but I want to quote him on this. This is something he said not too long ago: "Too often, politicians cannot resist the temptation to interfere. Regrettably, that was also true under the Eves government when we pulled a 180-degree turn. This constant change of direction in government policy means investors no longer find Ontario a safe and stable environment in which to invest...."

It's too bad that he doesn't take his own advice when it comes to our clean energy policy.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd love him to ask seniors across this province if they think their hydro bills have flatlined.

There were renewable projects in Ontario before your green energy experiments, and there will be under an Ontario PC government. But an Ontario PC—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. Stop the clock. I remind honourable ministers, particularly the ministers this is directed to, of the motto of this place, which is to hear the other side. The honourable member is asking a question directed at one of your min-

isters, and I hope you would be respectful so that your minister could hear the question.

Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: An Ontario PC government will put Ontario families first. We will pursue renewable energy projects and power at prices that families can afford.

Premier McGuinty used to say, "There is a direct correlation between Hydro's rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario. As the rates go up, so will the rate of unemployment." Then he increased hydro rates by 150%, if you're on time-of-use, and killed 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Now he's telling Ontario families to get ready for him to increase their hydro bills by another 46%.

Why is a change in government the only way to stop a serial job killer in his tracks?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Leader of the Opposition's plan to destroy Ontario's clean energy economy takes us back to the days of burning dirty coal. It will not only take jobs away from this province; it will impact the health of Ontarians. And this is what the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The same lecture I just delivered to the government side holds true for the opposition side as well.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think the members opposite should listen to what the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment had to say about their plan: "The Conservatives' proposal to kill" clean "energy will be a disaster for human health and the environment. It will be returning to coal—the world's most climate-destructive fuel—and the thousands of illnesses and hundreds of deaths that coal causes in Ontario each year. 'Doctors are appalled that Mr. Hudak would embrace such an irresponsible plan.'"

We stand with people who want to build a stronger province and create jobs and a healthier future for our—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Information skills are crucial to the success of our students in the 21st century. Students need school libraries staffed with trained teacher-librarians to develop these skills. But in Ontario, according to the report from People for Education, fewer students than ever have access to teacher-librarians and school libraries are closing left, right and centre.

Why is the McGuinty government allowing the gradual yet dramatic death of school libraries in Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have this opportunity to clarify for all the members of this assembly that there was only one government that actually cut funding for libraries and library resources, and that was the previous government.

Our government, on the other hand, has increased funding in education overall by 46%, but certainly directly to libraries as well, because we see them as very important resources. I think that if you read the report carefully, you will appreciate that the number of school librarians has actually increased under the term of this government. We will continue to work with boards.

I, for one, have had the opportunity to visit many schools where one of the first features in the school that they want to take me to is their library, because it is such a wonderful and valuable resource that supports student learning and student success in our schools.

So I say, especially to those locally elected boards that might be considering pulling back—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We are witnessing the dramatic death of school libraries in Ontario, and she says everything is great. I just don't get it.

She also knows that library cuts are taking place because school boards are struggling to balance their budgets as they deal with aging buildings, declining enrolment and increased student needs.

Instead of blaming boards, as she has done, why won't the minister give their students the best shot at success and put in place a policy—and funding, by the way, wouldn't be a problem—to ensure that all Ontario students have access to school libraries and trained teacher-librarians?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I'm very happy to have this opportunity to educate the honourable member. Since coming to government, this government has increased funding for school librarians and school libraries by 12%; that, in the face of declining enrolment. I would also say to the honourable member that in addition to this commitment, over \$40 million has been committed over four years for elementary school libraries. This coming year, boards are receiving \$589 million in funding particularly for textbooks and those many resources that will be placed in libraries.

1110

Again, I say to the honourable member, we have been increasing resources to school boards. There are boards that are actually looking for innovative ways to invest in their libraries. I'm very disappointed that there are—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Two key indicators of sound economic policy are job creation and attracting private sector investment. The recent global recession has highlighted our need to look beyond traditional areas of expertise. With a highly skilled workforce and an economy recovering better than most, Ontario needs to build and lead the way in creating jobs.

Minister, all hyperbole aside, how is our province's energy policy supporting workers and creating new opportunities?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for raising an exceptionally important question.

Job creation and the attraction of private sector investment are at the heart of building a strong new economy like the one we're building right here in Ontario when it comes to clean energy. That's why it almost defied belief last week when the Leader of the Opposition came out with his reckless plan to drive billions of dollars of investment out of this province and kill thousands of clean energy jobs.

I want to quote what the Windsor Star thought of this plan. They said, "Hudak's antiquated attitude toward energy doesn't just stand to harm the environment. It will be a colossal blow to this region, which is in the midst of a diversification plan driven by the green energy sector."

We stand with communities and workers across this province. Ontario families will reject their plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Minister, clean energy is our future in Ontario, North America and around the world. Those jurisdictions astute enough to seize the opportunity for global leadership in this new economy will prosper in the decades ahead.

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition babbled on about his destructive job-killing plan. Already his plan is being called everything from short-sighted to disastrous.

I don't want to see an economic tsunami sweep across Ontario. Before the member from Newmarket–Aurora has to sell his green energy shares, can you commit to continuing to champion our province as open for business and new green energy investments from around the world?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, absolutely, Ontario will always be open to business under this government and under the leadership of this Premier. We reject the approach taken by the members opposite. We will fight their job-killing agenda every step of the way.

We do, however, welcome the support of the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who we now know sits on the board of directors of a clean energy company, a company that his leader wants to hammer. I wish him all the best with his feed-in-tariff project and thank him for believing in clean renewable wind energy, getting off of coal and creating jobs. Even with those feelings, we know that his views and those of his leader may not exactly align, but we welcome his support for our clean energy act. We welcome his support to help us build jobs across this province and build a stronger economy.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also to the Minister of Energy. Last week, we showed why the job numbers you've been using to defend the sweetheart Samsung deal cannot be believed. Even those in the renewable energy industry are coming forward to say that

you've been grossly over-inflating job numbers. For instance, you said the largest solar farm in North America would have 800 jobs, but there are only eight permanent workers, which includes one guy who mows the lawn and the guy who guards the lawn mower.

The only place Samsung may have created jobs is in Windsor. Is every family in Ontario supposed to pay 46% more on their hydro bills so the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development can shovel pork into their ridings?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The PC Party promise to tear down our clean energy economy and kill thousands of jobs in Ontario is being rejected by families right across this province. A few days ago, and even today, they had the audacity to stand in this House and suggest not only do they want to kill jobs across this province, but they're calling into question the fact that workers who are out there working very hard across this province in our clean energy economy do not even exist.

I'd like to introduce you to a young lady by the name of Misty Oakley. She's a Siliken employee with three young children. Ms. Oakley was on social assistance before securing a job at a solar manufacturing plant. She said that employment with Siliken means good security and a good future for her and her family.

We care about people like Ms. Oakley. We're going to work for people like Ms. Oakley. We're going to fight—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: What's being rejected by Ontario families is that dying government over there. Windsor families and businesses have been losing jobs and investors because of high-priced power generated by Premier McGuinty's expensive energy experiments. The local minister stood by and said nothing about the Premier's "buy high, sell low" energy policy, which has our neighbours and competitors laughing at your economic mismanagement. Ontario businesses and the families they employ are not laughing at your legacy of killing 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and yet you're still on a collision course to kill more jobs. Spain says you'll kill 2.2 jobs for every job you create. Italy says you're killing up to 6.9 manufacturing jobs with every job you claim to create.

What makes you think Ontario families should pay with their jobs for the McGuinty Liberals' seat loss prevention program?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've not only heard from members of the PC caucus; we've heard from countless workers across this province, we're hearing from Ontario families and we're hearing from numerous Ontario businesses. What they're telling us is that they do not want to go in the direction that that Leader of the Opposition's plan is going. They do not want him to kill our clean en-

ergy economy. They want to maintain the thousands of jobs that we're creating.

Today, 20 businesses in the Ottawa area sent a letter to the Leader of the Opposition, urging him to reverse his promise to kill our clean energy policy and the thousands of clean energy jobs across this province. This is what the letter says: "Mr. Hudak, business seeks a stable economic climate investment. Your party's decision has introduced uncertainty into Ontario's economic future."

If they really cared about our economy, if they really cared about jobs, if they really cared about a cleaner health—

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

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. According to a major Workers' Action Centre report released last week, one in three low-wage workers has had wages unfairly withheld or outright stolen by employers. For some workers, that means paycheques are short hours; for others, it means being denied vacation pay or being forced to work outrageous overtime hours for no pay at all. When the Workers' Action Centre contacted the Minister of Labour to set up a meeting to discuss the deplorable situation, we would like to know why you wouldn't meet with them.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm not aware of the request for the meeting, but I do know this: I very much value the report that was brought forward by the Workers' Action Centre. I value even more the tremendous amount of work that our workers do. Everyone who works deserves to be paid. I've acknowledged the fact that people are vulnerable out there. It's why we've doubled the number of inspectors that we have. It's why we've increased the number of inspections directly to those areas affected. It's why we've now retrieved over \$65 million in lost wages over the last number of years that we've been in power, much more than the opposite members have done when they were there.

Ninety-seven prosecutions were all that was had in those years; we've now had over 1,800. We'll continue to address those very issues, and we support our workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Minister of Labour: According to the report, the situation in Ontario today for many workers amounts to what they call wage theft. Minister, your government has dealt a serious blow to these workers with your Open for Business legislation. You now force workers to talk to their employers first, rather than make safer, anonymous complaints.

When will this government take the plight of Ontario's vulnerable workers seriously and finally enforce its very own labour laws?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It is actually very true that we've made some changes to our Employment Standards Act. It's absolutely true that we've modernized and we've made more efficient and diversified the process.

We do want those employees to receive their funds. It's why we've made the changes to encourage that dialogue so that we can get early resolution. We've increased the number of staff required to reduce the backlog and we've encouraged dialogue between both parties.

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Always keep in mind that if there's intimidation or if there's lack of understanding, they do not have to go that route. We encourage them to do so. As a result, claims have been reduced, more money has been received, people are being addressed and they've now got tools available to them with our ministry to facilitate that process. We fully support our workers.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know this government is committed to ensuring high-quality health care close to home. Since 2003, we've seen a number of investments in a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring this goal.

A great example of this, throughout the province, is the expansion of family health teams. These are teams of doctors, nurses and other health professionals who work together to provide better care for their patients. Minister, through the Speaker to you: Could you please tell the Legislature about how Ontario's family health teams are improving that access to health care and improving the quality of health care for the people in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Oakville for this question. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to outline how the expansion of family health teams is benefiting Ontarians.

This government has announced the creation of 200 family health teams right across this province. They're already caring for over 2.6 million Ontarians, and over half a million of those did not have a doctor before the creation of that family health team. When fully up and running, these 200 family health teams will provide care for three million people.

Family health teams are an exciting new innovation in primary care. They're ensuring that people have access to care in an interdisciplinary setting. I'm very, very proud of the work that these teams are doing, and I know that the government will continue to invest in them because they're good for the people in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I fully agree: Family health teams are providing excellent service to the people of Ontario. I have a family health team in my own riding.

Many members, I know, would like to see an expansion of family health teams in their own communities; certainly, constituents in my own community would welcome the improved access to health care that a new family health team would bring to Oakville. Would the minister please update the House on the status of family health teams in Ontario and, more specifically, within my own riding of Oakville?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First, I'd like to congratulate the member from Oakville for his tireless advocacy for the people in his community.

The issue of a second family health team in Oakville is something I know the member is very passionate about. He's spoken to me about this on several occasions. I'm very, very happy to say that on Wednesday of this week, I will be in Oakville opening the second family health team in Oakville, the Oakmed family health team. It will have seven physicians, a nurse practitioner and other health care professionals. It will provide excellent care to the people of Oakville. In fact, this new family health team will provide care to over 9,000 people.

This is one more example of the great successes coming out of this government's family health team model. We're very proud of this work.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development. In 2005, the minister's forest sector council noted that rising costs were undermining forestry in Ontario. Then they brought in the HST, raised the hydro prices to the point where industry can no longer compete, and brought in more and more regulation and government control, choking off the industry. The result: over 60 mills closed and 40,000 jobs lost.

Now the government is planning to transfer the cost of the road construction and maintenance program onto the struggling forest sector. Minister, your government is responsible for \$1 billion wasted in eHealth. The same \$1 billion would have provided 13 years of road construction and maintenance. How can you justify further damage to forestry and the honest, hard-working members there?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think, as the member knows—certainly, members of the House should know that—in the past six years, this government has contributed a total of \$399.5 million towards the forest industry expenditures on the construction and maintenance of forest access roads. In fact, we uploaded those costs that had been previously downloaded by a previous government, recognizing the challenges the forestry industry faced. In each year of that program, forest industry expenditures have obviously been important. We want to make sure we continue to support them.

Certainly, we know that with the economic times, this government has had to make some tough financial decisions. We continue to support the forest industry access road funding. There may be a reduction this year, but we're going to do what we can to meet the commitments. But there's been over \$400 million over the last six years—a pretty substantial investment—in our support for the forestry sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, it's disgraceful that you've cut this economically important program without notice to the industry. Such actions are unfair and show no respect for the economy of northern Ontario.

Your lack of respect for the north is not new. You abandoned them on Bill 191. You shut down debate on Bill 151. Last week, the Premier couldn't even be bothered to show up at FONOM. The government has treated the north poorly, but now you've decided to abandon the basic principles of fairness, warning and decency.

You didn't list these cuts in the budget just two months ago. Now it's clear who is getting stuck with the bill for your secret OPSEU deal. Minister, you are cutting programs for northern forestry so that your government can dump more cash into the Toronto unions' pork barrel.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We took the cost of the forest access roads off the backs of the forestry companies and uploaded them back to the provincial government. A previous government downloaded those costs. We have spent \$400 million on forest access roads, in addition to other forestry incentive programs. We've flowed over \$750 million to the forestry sector.

We are working closely with industry related to our modernization of the forest tenure process in the province of Ontario, listening very closely to industry in that regard as well. We are very, very proud of the support we have in the forestry sector. We have great confidence in the reinvigoration and revitalization of the forestry sector, and we'll continue to work closely with the industry in terms of the road access funding, because we recognize how important that is in terms of supporting the sector as we move forward.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The McGuinty Liberals' haphazard wood reallocation policy is costing jobs in yet another northern community. The Hudson sawmill close to Sioux Lookout has lost its wood allocation and, as a result, has filed for bankruptcy. Sioux Lookout was hit hard by the economic downturn, but now the community is being hit hard by their own government's policies, which show complete disregard for the north.

My question is simple: How does the McGuinty government justify eliminating 65 more jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks very much for the question. Certainly, we are very, very pleased that through the wood supply competition, we've been able to make 26 separate announcements—talk to your colleague from Kenora–Rainy River—in terms of wood allocations going to Dryden Domtar; to Ignace, in terms of a pellet plant they've developed; and to many other communities in northern Ontario. We're creating new jobs and retaining many other jobs. In fact, about 1,500 jobs have been created or retained as a result of this.

We are certainly conscious of the challenges faced with the community of Sioux Lookout related to the de-

cision on the wood supply competition not going in their favour. The fact is, we are continuing to work with that community. We recognize that for any community that is not successful, that has an impact. But we cannot be more happy about the fact that we are creating thousands of jobs, putting Ontario's wood back to work, and we will continue to work with all the communities, including Sioux Lookout, that are challenged by the decisions that were made by this very, very fair, unbiased competition that was put in place under the—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a government that allowed over 40,000 jobs to walk out of northern Ontario while they did nothing. The people of Sioux Lookout are rightfully angry that the government is taking away more jobs.

Sioux Lookout Mayor Dennis Leney said that there has been some interest from First Nations in the Hudson sawmill, but this government is denying the sawmill its wood supply, which makes it impossible for the mill to get back to work.

Why doesn't this government award the wood supply to the town of Sioux Lookout and allow them to look for a financially viable operator? Why are the McGuinty Liberals so intent on destroying good jobs in Sioux Lookout as well as around northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: When we began the wood supply competition, which is an unprecedented amount of wood—it ended up being about nine million cubic metres of wood—we recognized that there were certain operations that had not been harvesting wood for one year, two years, sometimes three years, and there was a challenge in terms of some of those communities.

1130

We put forward the competition on the basis of—they put their application forward. Some 115 proposals came forward, and we've had a series of good-news announcements, including, as I pointed out earlier, at Dryden Domtar, which the member from Kenora–Rainy River would be pleased about, I would think, and in terms of Ignace as well. Certainly, the challenge is there with Sioux Lookout, and that's why we're continuing to work with the community.

But indeed, this is about putting our wood back to work; it's about putting workers back to work. When you look at the 1,500-plus jobs we've created or retained across the province, let alone the almost three million cubic metres of wood we've put back to work, this is a positive program that we all need to support, because we're creating work for forestry workers all across the north.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Education. Today, People for Education put out a report stating that 56% of Ontario elementary schools

have a teacher-librarian and that this number is down from 80% little more than a decade ago.

Minister, what can I tell my constituents about this? Has our support for librarians decreased?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to respond to the question that has come from my colleague on behalf of his constituents. I would say to the honourable member that it's important to distinguish, when they speak about the reductions in support for libraries, that that in fact did take place between 1998 and 2002.

Since 2003, since we've come to government, the number of full-time equivalent teacher-librarians and library technicians has increased by over 12%, from 2,892 positions to 3,240 positions this year. It is important to note that every new school built in the province of Ontario has accommodation for a library, because our government values the resource of a library in every school.

This is in addition to the commitment of \$40 million since 2008 to support an estimated 160 positions—

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Thank you, Minister. Today, the Toronto Star reported that the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board is planning to dismantle all of its libraries and has laid off all but four of their library technicians. Minister, this is of great concern to my constituents in the riding of Essex, as libraries are an integral part of a school and students rely on libraries to enhance their learning.

Minister, why has the board taken this approach? Is it because of underfunding?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, following up on my previous answer, our government has only increased funding to libraries. It was the previous government that cut funding to libraries. Our government has only increased funding to libraries, and support to the Windsor Catholic board has increased by 34%, and that in the face of a declining enrolment of 17%.

We believe that it's very important to provide boards with those resources. That's why in every new school we build, we make sure that there is a library there. I'm sure that people in the community are going to be contacting the people they elected last October to have them understand that they too believe—because we've been hearing from parents about the value libraries have to support the learning of their children and their success.

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Infrastructure. Since—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's my first time in the chair during question period. I would ask the members to be gentle. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'd ask for the same consideration.

Since 2005, only contractors who are a signatory to an agreement between the city of Hamilton and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America have been allowed to bid on city construction jobs. Limiting the competitive bid process could end up inflating the cost of the Pan Am stadium and velodrome stadium projects planned for Hamilton by millions of dollars. I'd like to know, from the Minister of Infrastructure: Can he give us his assurance that no contractor will be shut out of the bidding process for these projects and that Infrastructure Ontario will ensure a fair and open bidding process?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased to answer that question. First of all, I want to say that the province of Ontario has had a very positive working relationship with the municipalities. Municipalities in Ontario have the right to make rules with respect to procurement and with respect to agreements with labour groups in their community. They've had that right for a considerable period of time.

We will work closely with the city of Hamilton on all infrastructure projects. In areas where the city has the right to make arrangements with labour groups or unions, we will respect the municipalities in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: In that case, the minister will listen to the city of Hamilton, which is claiming that the carpenters' union monopoly agreement has cost the city as much as \$10 million during a regular construction year. Applying that same monopoly agreement to the Pan Am projects will potentially inflate those projects by millions of dollars to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Will the minister, based on his assurance that he respects municipalities, undertake to ensure that all Pan Am Games infrastructure projects will be subject to an open bidding process in this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member should know that the construction industry across Ontario is extremely happy with our infrastructure program and our infrastructure spending. We have had, in the province of Ontario and across Canada, the most successful infrastructure program in the history of Canada, in the history of Ontario. It's been exceptional.

We in the ministry have received almost no complaints whatsoever from the construction industry. Those complaints that we've received, we have met with individuals and we're working out any concerns that they might have.

This has been the infrastructure government: the best infrastructure government in the history of the province of Ontario.

LABOUR RELATIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail. During the Vale Inco strike in Voisey's Bay, former Newfoundland premier Danny Williams set up an industrial inquiry commission to examine the strike. The commission reported that labour laws need to

change to ensure foreign corporations “respond to Canadian labour relations values.”

In comparison, the Ontario government did nothing during or after the strike and left 3,000 workers on the picket lines for a year, to the detriment of the Sudbury economy and community. Unlike the Newfoundland government, Ontario’s government has buried its head in the sand and said that everything is good with our labour laws.

Will the minister review the protracted strikes and lockouts in our province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: On this side of the House, we are indeed very proud of the extensive work we’ve done with our labour groups. In Ontario, over the last eight years, we’ve had the best labour peace that we’ve had in all history. Ninety-nine per cent of all labour negotiations are done without lockout or strike, and we continue to advance on that cause. In situations where there are disputes, we have our mediators, our professional staff, available to them at all times.

We will continue to support the outstanding men and women who work in this province, who provide an excellent degree of service and make us competitive on the world stage, including those individuals in Sudbury.

M^{me} France Gélinas: In Ontario we see a pattern of long strikes and lockouts. We see a new industry: providing security guards and replacement workers during strikes and lockouts. In Sudbury, Brantford, Vaughan, Trenton, Nanticoke, Toronto, Brampton, Mississauga, Bowmanville, Pembroke, Sarnia and Hamilton, we see protracted labour disputes, but the minister says all is good with our labour laws.

Will the McGuinty government follow Newfoundland’s lead and set up a commission of inquiry to examine all of those prolonged, protracted labour disputes here in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We will continue to support our labour groups. We’ll also continue to support the contracts that are in place. We will continue to support those workers and what makes Ontario competitive. We will have our contracts.

What we won’t do is go back to the days when there was constant disruption and constant disputes or to the time when the NDP, when they were ripping up their contracts and introducing social contracts. That is not what this side is about. We are not going to propose any more antagonism. We certainly want fair agreements. We want people to negotiate at collective bargaining, and we encourage the collective bargaining process.

TAXATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, you recently appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates, where you tabled the average annual savings and costs by household income as a result of our government’s comprehensive tax reform package. Minister, you showed that, for households in Ontario with an income of \$150,000 or less, families will

break even or be ahead with this package. You also mentioned a list of prominent politicians, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his finance minister, who are supportive of the tax harmonization.

We know the federal Conservatives support tax harmonization. Will the minister tell us who else of note supports harmonization?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I want to take this opportunity to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans. He’s doing a great job in his riding, and he’s letting his constituents know about the HST and our comprehensive tax package. He’s doing a great job, so thank you very much for that.

The member is right: We did receive a lot of federal support. In fact, the federal government played a crucial role in supporting Ontario’s move to adopting the HST. It provided Ontario with some generous incentives to harmonize, such as \$4.3 billion in transition support and agreeing to administer the HST at no charge, among other things.

Here’s what Minister Flaherty, Canada’s Minister of Finance, said: “I have long said provincial sales tax harmonization is the single most important step provinces with retail sales taxes could take to improve the competitiveness of Canadian businesses.”

The real question is, where do they stand?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, if the total household income is less than \$150,000 on average, a family breaks even or is slightly ahead with our new tax reform package. I note that this is because our tax package includes \$12 billion in tax relief for Ontario families.

I also know that Jack Mintz, an economist, has reviewed our comprehensive tax package and said that the HST will strengthen our economy over the next 10 years, as it will (1) attract an additional \$47 billion in investment and (2) add 600,000 jobs to our economy over that 10 years, and (3) the earning power of Ontarians would be increased 10%.

Minister, this all seems positive, yet the opposition parties are not supporting it—a rookie mistake if I ever saw one.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: There were a couple of other quotes I wanted to use in the first question. The first one is from a member whom I have a lot of great respect for, and that’s the member for Newmarket–Aurora. He says, “No one can argue with wanting a more simplified tax process. I think we all support that.” I would agree.

The other quote I’d like to share is from Senator Bob Runciman. He said, “I think, in theory, our party is supportive of harmonization.”

But here’s someone I think we all respect. He says, “The HST, which many people love to hate, is nonetheless good economic and tax policy if we want to create jobs in the province of Ontario. And you know what, it took some courage to do it.” That was John Tory at the CivicAction summit.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 1 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Ontario fruit wineries that are here at Queen's Park today for the selection of the Ontario legislative fruit wine. The PC caucus has been pleased to work with them, and I'm looking forward to speaking with them this evening and enjoying great Ontario fruit wines.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I'm pleased to welcome Ms. Joung-Ran Lim, Mr. Han Park, Mr. Young-Woo Kim and Mr. Edmund Luk from Richmond Hill to the House today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to introduce a very good friend—and a very excellent farm operation in my riding of Durham—Jim Millson, who's on the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It gives me special pleasure to introduce to the House, in the members' east gallery, Tea Rosic, who is serving as my student intern. Her brother Andrej had previously served as a legislative page in this House. I welcome her on her first visit to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, would like to introduce someone from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario: John Palmer, who represents—I'm not sure of the number of the district, but it's Waterloo and Oxford. He's done a wonderful job for a great number of years. We thank you very much for being with us today, John.

Mr. Dave Levac: I guess it's my turn to introduce a dairy farmer. He's one of the big shots in the associations, and he's got this growing agenda of the number of things he's done in farming in the riding of Brant, the province of Ontario and the country of Canada: Mr. Bill Emmott. Thanks very much for joining us, Bill. You're going to take grief for that, I know.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce a friend of mine, a councillor from the township of Enniskillen, John Phair, in the west members' gallery. He's also a journalist with the Ontario Farmer.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce several members of the arts and culture community in Oakville who will be joining us momentarily: Megan Whittington from the Oakville Arts Council; Bernadette Shaw from the Oakville Arts Council; Jean Gandubert from Community Arts Space; Heather Hogan from the Halton Multicultural Council; and Wan Shi Liu from Sheridan College.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I welcome back again this afternoon—because they didn't get enough this morning—Gisèle Hébert from my local children's aid society, and Rick Sapinski, the chair of our children's aid society. Great folks from my riding of Nipissing.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAIRY FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On behalf of the PC caucus, I'm pleased to rise today to thank the Dairy Farmers of Ontario for coming to Queen's Park and to recognize their contribution to our province.

Dairy is the largest agricultural sector in Ontario. Over 4,800 dairy farmers produce 2.5 billion litres of milk each year, enough to fill the Rogers Centre twice.

The Dairy Farmers also contribute to our province in other ways. They operate the very successful elementary school milk program, which gets milk into 70% of Ontario schools, and I know they are looking to increase that percentage to ensure that even more Ontario children get access to nutritious milk.

Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak and I will be looking forward to meeting with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario this afternoon, and the PC Party will reiterate our commitment to supply management.

We are looking forward to hearing more about some of their great programs, including the new farmer quota program, which is an initiative that the DFO started to help young farmers who may not have the resources to get into dairy farming. We're also looking forward to hearing what the government can do to help them.

Dairy farmers, like all farmers, are impacted by increasing hydro rates and smart meters. In fact, a dairy farmer recently had a smart meter installed and called my colleague from Simcoe-Grey to ask the Premier how he was supposed to teach his cows to tell time.

Again, I thank the Dairy Farmers for coming to Queen's Park. Tim Hudak and I look forward to meeting with them this afternoon.

THE CHILDREN'S STOREFRONT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to take the time today to recognize the efforts of an organization that has been providing outstanding services for parents and children in my community, The Children's Storefront.

The Children's Storefront has been an icon for Trinity-Spadina parents for about 35 years. As the first child-parent centre in Ontario, the Storefront paved the way for many of the free programs now in existence.

The Storefront's mission has always been to be accessible to all families with young children. It's for that reason that they do not charge a fee for their services. There is no structured programming at the Storefront, which means that everyone is welcome at any time. For parents adapting to the needs of their young children, this kind of scheduling is welcomed with open arms. The Storefront receives visits from 7,000 adults and 12,000 children a year. Run on a shoestring budget, available monies have been carefully and deliberately spent on children's literature and timeless toys.

The importance of the centre was made obvious when the entire community rallied to raise \$250,000 to pay for a new venue when the old one burned down in a fire. I wish The Children's Storefront, its staff and participants all the best for continued success in their new location at Bloor and Shaw St., and for the continued success of their programs.

HAN PARK

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to recognize the extraordinary achievements of one of my constituents, Mr. Han Gil Park, who is a grade 12 student at Richmond Green Secondary School in Richmond Hill.

As we all know, the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan devastated many across the world, especially those in the affected areas. The two tragic events killed more than 10,000 people and affected many Canadians here and abroad.

To help these victims, Han Gil Park decided to undertake a project to help those who were left without shelter or food. Initially, this good Samaritan had planned to raise \$1,000 in one week by folding paper cranes and asking for donations amongst his peers at school. His fundraising mission took off rapidly in the school and, with the helping hands of fellow schoolmates, he eventually raised more than \$1,800 and reached his goal of folding more than 1,000 paper cranes.

One of the teachers, Ms. Morris, was most helpful in assisting with the paper crane fundraising project. Mr. Parks's efforts and accomplishments set a fine example to the youth in our society, and show us how connected and caring the youth today are.

On behalf of all Ontarians and the residents of Richmond Hill, I would like to thank Han Gil Park for his dedication and devotion.

NORTH GRENVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to celebrate the opening of the North Grenville Public Library. Last week, I was excited to have the opportunity for a sneak peek of this wonderful facility, which doesn't officially open until May 28. I attended the groundbreaking of the \$5.1-million library in the heart of Old Town Kemptville last June. Ever since, anticipation has grown as each new brick has been added to that 10,000-square-foot building.

The opening of this state-of-the-art library is the final chapter in a story that began as a dream some 10 years ago. Having seen the inside, I can assure people who have worked so hard over the past decade one thing: You won't be disappointed. The fabulous new library provides the perfect space for minds young and old to expand their horizons.

This, however, is a tale about creating more than a building. Governments, including the forward-thinking municipality, provided \$4 million for the bricks and mortar, and for over three years, the Room to Read cam-

paign has raised \$1 million to give the library the books, the technology and the furnishings that are at its heart.

With each donation, whether it was the toonie that the youngster gave at a yard sale or the amazing \$150,000 gift from the Norenberg family, for whom the building will be named, the campaign was building something else. They've created a more tightly connected community by proving that great things happen when people work together for a good cause.

For everyone involved, I say congratulations. I look forward to checking out my first book there soon.

BUDDHA'S LIGHT VEGETARIAN FOOD FAIR

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yesterday, I attended the Buddha's Light vegetarian food fair at the Fo Guang Shan Temple in the village of Meadowvale. We were kindly welcomed by Abbess Chueh Chu and by some 4,000 community members who attended the fair throughout the day.

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Despite the wet weather, guests enjoyed the temple's atmosphere of serenity, peace and harmony. The fair's opening ceremonies always include a multi-faith world peace blessing. Representatives of different faiths brought their greetings. Traditional practices of bathing the Buddha, a peace bell blessing and a spectacular dragon dance also adorned the occasion.

The Buddha's Light International Association presented a cheque to the University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work for \$30,000 for programs to help immigrant students and families. Guests enjoyed the famous food fair and dined on an assortment of traditional vegetarian oriental foods along with community members.

The Fo Guang Shan's food fair and Chinese New Year celebration are annual events. Guests share the temple and its Buddhist community's compassion and tranquility. The temple has a library, souvenir shop and tea room open year-round to the public. The Fo Guang Shan temple is a landmark of beauty and humility that brightens our community in Meadowvale.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. John O'Toole: The McGuinty government's harmonized sales tax adds 8% to the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel in Ontario. This means that the McGuinty government is siphoning an estimated \$1.5 billion from the wallets of Ontario drivers every year.

You might think that a government with a windfall of that size would at least take the extra gas revenue and spend it on better roads, bridges and transportation infrastructure in our rural communities of Ontario. They have all this money, yet, a deficit. But this government is so out of touch that they're wasting hard-earned taxpayers' money on expensive energy experiments, secret Samsung deals, more pay increases, more red tape and bigger bureaucracy.

Over 100 municipalities endorsed the resolution asking the government to invest some of its HST revenue from gas and diesel into transportation infrastructure. The resolution is being circulated by the CAA South Central Ontario and the Ontario Good Roads Association.

Like the vast majority of Ontarians, I know Ontario can't afford this HST and we certainly can't afford a government that collects an extra \$1.5 billion at the gas pump and won't share it with the motorists who really put the money in in the first place. I remain very concerned that Premier McGuinty will raise your taxes, despite all the Liberal promises. I remain concerned. That's what he's always done. That's what he'll continue to do: raise the taxes every time he gets a chance.

ANDREW FLECK CHILD CARE SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to recognize Andrew Fleck Child Care Services, which is celebrating their 100th anniversary of service to Ottawa's families. Since the beginning, they have been a vital, progressive and compassionate service for generations of Ottawa's children.

Opening in November 1911, they came into being to serve a very new need: proper care for children whose mothers had no choice but to work to support their families. Through poverty or the absence of a husband or father, these women faced very dire choices, and it's a point of pride that this service began to assist these women in difficult circumstances. The driving force in these early years was Gertrude Fleck, who in 1931 donated the building they still occupy in the name of her late husband Andrew. The organization may bear his name, but it was her life's work.

Andrew Fleck Child Care Services now has a full-time staff of 120 people, operates 11 programs in six locations and provides a continuum of child care, information, support and early years services to over 4,300 children and 27,000 families in Ottawa each year. They strive for high-quality, affordable, accessible, accountable and inclusive child care that promotes the optimum physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of the child, something I'm proud to say this government believes in also. I would like to—

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

BLADDER CANCER

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'd like to welcome David Guttman and Jack Moon to the House today; both are bladder cancer survivors. Together they started the Canadian Bladder Cancer Network, or CBCAN, a nationally registered charity to raise awareness of bladder cancer.

What many Ontarians may not realize is that according to Cancer Care Ontario, bladder cancer is the ninth most common cancer in Canada and it's the third most common cancer facing men. Unfortunately, bladder

cancer doesn't have the profile of other cancers, such as breast or prostate cancer. That's why the work of the Canadian Bladder Cancer Network is so important.

An Ontario-wide media campaign started on May 9 and will continue until June 1. On Saturday, May 28, the CBCAN will commemorate Bladder Cancer Awareness Day and will hold the first major bladder cancer education meeting in Canada.

CBCAN continues to raise awareness of this cancer and help those living with the disease. Last September, the group held its first awareness walk. In fact, the largest walk raised over \$10,000 right here in Toronto. This fall, CBCAN will hold walks all over Canada to further raise awareness and funds to support research into the cure for this disease. CBCAN has also helped patients in remote places to locate and connect with specialists in health care centres that specialize in bladder cancer.

On behalf of all Ontarians, I'd like to thank our guests for their commitment to raising awareness of bladder cancer. Of course, we all know that more needs to be done but CBCAN has certainly started us well on our way.

OAKVILLE ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In the members' gallery this afternoon, I just introduced several members from the dynamic arts and culture community in Oakville. Earlier in the session, I had the opportunity to host a round table. We discussed the challenges, the dreams, the strategies and the vision for the future of arts in my community. The round table was held in partnership with the Oakville Arts Council and set up to provide a local united voice for advocating and promoting the welfare of the arts.

We know the importance of the arts. As Megan Whittington of the Oakville Arts Council put it at the round table, arts and culture help to regenerate communities. Cultural industries create job growth and they turn ordinary cities into destination cities. The arts also help keep people happy and healthy. The participants work together to propose ideas that would benefit the arts and culture community.

These ideas were formed into an excellent policy brief. This brief will be submitted to the Minister of Tourism and Culture for his review.

I'd like to thank Megan of the Oakville Arts Council for the partnership on the round table and my sincere thanks to the many participants in the development of this policy brief. I think it's going to make Oakville a better community.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding meeting

times for the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that in addition to its regular meeting time, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 18, 2011, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 188, An Act to amend the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act.

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

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 12 midnight on Monday, May 16, 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 66. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Okay. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I apologize for not saying what I was asking for.

Things move so quickly here, but the member for Wellington–Halton Hills does have a bill to be introduced and I'm asking for unanimous consent to allow that to happen.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the members of the House for allowing that. I was just distracted for a minute and I apologize.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BANNING COLLUSION IN ELECTORAL ADVERTISING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 INTERDISANT LA COLLUSION DANS LE CADRE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 195, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act to ban collusion in electoral advertising / Projet de loi 195, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections pour interdire la collusion dans le cadre de la publicité électorale.

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.

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Mr. Ted Arnott: The bill amends the Election Finances Act to ban third parties from colluding with a registered political party, a constituency association or a candidate when engaging in third party election advertising.

It also extends the limit that section 38 of the act imposes on campaign expenses incurred by a registered party, and persons or bodies acting on its behalf during a campaign period, to include advertising expenses incurred by a third party during a campaign period, if the third party acted with the express or implied knowledge and consent of a registered party.

The chief financial officer of every party, constituency association or candidate is required to include those expenses in the financial statement that section 42 of the act requires the officer to file with the chief elections officer.

PETITIONS

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to introduce this petition.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Prue: J’ai une pétition ici à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que l’article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés garantit l’accès à un enseignement public de langue française;

« Attendu qu’il y a, depuis des années, une pénurie sérieuse d’écoles publiques de langue française à Toronto;

« Attendu que le Toronto District School Board a déclaré que l'école Essex West school et le Toronto West collegiate institute ne sont pas nécessaires à leurs fins dans le sens du règlement 444 de la Loi sur l'éducation encadrant l'aliénation de biens immeubles excédentaires;

« Attendu que le Conseil scolaire Viamonde a déclaré son intérêt à se prévaloir de la priorité que lui accorde le règlement 444 pour acquérir ces propriétés;

« Attendu que le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario a confirmé à maintes reprises, au cours de la dernière décennie, que des fonds étaient disponibles pour que le conseil puisse acquérir de nouvelles écoles aussitôt que des édifices adéquats seraient disponibles;

« Nous, soussignés, membres de la communauté francophone et francophile du grand Toronto, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que le gouvernement de l'Ontario respecte les garanties données au conseil par son ministère de l'Éducation et permette l'achat par le conseil des édifices du Essex West school et du Toronto West collegiate institute dans le respect de l'esprit et de la lettre du règlement 444 de la Loi sur l'éducation de l'Ontario ».

Je suis d'accord et je vais signer.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario provincial government has unilaterally ordered the closing of the Owen Sound and Walkerton jails"—and the Sarnia jail—"with no public input; and

"Whereas staff of both facilities will be forced to relocate from their home communities and the two rural municipalities will lose up to \$3 million in wages spent there; and

"Whereas the local aboriginal offenders will be forced away from their communities and local native resources. All offenders will be moved out of their localities, rehabilitative resources and family visitation. Intermittent sentenced offenders will have jobs placed in jeopardy as the travel to Penetanguishene will be too great; and

"Whereas rural communities hard hit by recession and manufacturing job loss need these well-paying jobs in their community;

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

"That Premier McGuinty supports the Owen Sound and Walkerton" and Sarnia jails and lets them remain open until such time as a new regional correctional facility can be opened.

I agree with this, support it with my signature and send it down with Allison.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Rosario Marchese: « Pétition pour des écoles publiques françaises adéquates :

« Attendu que l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés garantit l'accès à un enseignement public de langue française;

« Attendu qu'il y a, depuis des années, une pénurie sérieuse d'écoles publiques de langue française à Toronto;

« Attendu que le Toronto District School Board a déclaré que l'école Essex West school et le Toronto West collegiate institute ne sont pas nécessaires à leurs fins dans le sens du règlement 444 de la Loi sur l'éducation encadrant l'aliénation de biens immeubles excédentaires;

« Attendu que le Conseil scolaire Viamonde a déclaré son intérêt à se prévaloir de la priorité que lui accorde le règlement 444 pour acquérir ces propriétés;

« Attendu que le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario a confirmé à maintes reprises, au cours de la dernière décennie, que des fonds étaient disponibles pour que le conseil puisse acquérir de nouvelles écoles aussitôt que des édifices adéquats seraient disponibles;

« Nous, soussignés, membres de la communauté francophone et francophile du grand Toronto, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que le gouvernement de l'Ontario respecte les garanties données au conseil par son ministère de l'Éducation et permette l'achat par le conseil des édifices du Essex West school et du Toronto West collegiate institute dans le respect de l'esprit et de la lettre du règlement 444 de la Loi sur l'éducation de l'Ontario ».

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present petitions on behalf of my riding of Durham, and more specifically from Lou Speziale. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at 4148 Regional Highway 2, Newcastle"—

often known as Morgans Road—“and Lakeridge Road in Durham” region.

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and present it to one of the pages, Allison.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de présenter une pétition des francophones et francophiles de Toronto, qui est à 1 621 noms, pour des écoles publiques françaises adéquates :

« Attendu que l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés garantit l'accès à un enseignement public de langue française;

« Attendu qu'il y a, depuis des années, une pénurie sérieuse d'écoles publiques de langue française à Toronto;

« Attendu que le Toronto District School Board a déclaré que l'école Essex West school et le Toronto West collegiate institute ne sont pas nécessaires à leurs fins dans le sens du règlement 444 de la Loi sur l'éducation encadrant l'aliénation de biens immeubles excédentaires;

« Attendu que le Conseil scolaire Viamonde a déclaré son intérêt à se prévaloir de la priorité que lui accorde le règlement 444 pour acquérir ces propriétés;

« Attendu que le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario a confirmé à maintes reprises, au cours de la dernière décennie, que des fonds étaient disponibles pour que le conseil puisse acquérir de nouvelles écoles aussitôt que des édifices adéquats seraient disponibles;

« Nous, soussignés, membres de la communauté francophone et francophile du grand Toronto, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que le gouvernement de l'Ontario respecte les garanties données au conseil par son ministère de l'Éducation et permette l'achat par le conseil des édifices du Essex West school et du Toronto West collegiate institute dans le respect de l'esprit et de la lettre du règlement 444 de la Loi sur l'éducation de l'Ontario ».

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais y afficher mon nom et je demande à Rachel de l'amener à la Greffière.

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PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I'd like to thank Alison Saunders of Kenninghall Boulevard in Streetsville for having signed and sent it to me. It reads as follows:

“Whereas many seniors, visually impaired persons and other non-drivers do not need or are not eligible for a driver's licence; and

“Whereas many day-to-day transactions such as cashing of cheques; opening a new bank account at a financial institution; returning merchandise to a retail store; boarding a domestic flight; gaining admittance to bars, clubs and casinos; checking in at a hotel; obtaining a credit card, and even renting a video require government-issued photo identification; and

“Whereas Ontario's Photo Card Act, 2008, sets the legislative framework required to deliver a non-licence photo identification;

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

“That the province of Ontario develop a government-issued photo identification card and deliver, in 2011, an Ontario photo card identification for residents of the province over the age of 16 who cannot or choose not to drive.”

It's a reasonable request; I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Jonathan to carry it for me.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: Another group of petitions from the riding of Durham reads as follows:

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

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

“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 approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines.”

This is similar to the resolution by Tim Hudak, and it's submitted on behalf of Heather Rutherford and others in my riding of Durham.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui m'a été remise par Conrad Mazerolle de l'AEFO :

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais y afficher mon nom et je demande à Melanie de l'amener au Greffier.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Fortunately, I have another petition here that I could read, and it is similar to the other one as well. It says:

"Whereas Premier McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again"—surprise—"with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas, by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy and use every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements," and the list goes on;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to" and have respect for "Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign in support of it and present it to Hamza.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 186, An Act to amend the Tobacco Tax Act, when the bill is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, May 19, 2011, during its regular meeting time for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and at 2 p.m. on Monday, May 30, 2011, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 4 p.m. on Wednesday, May 25, 2011. At 5 p.m. on Monday, May 30, 2011, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on Monday, May 30, 2011. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, May 31, 2011. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion 75. Debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: After, I guess, three days that we've debated this bill in the House, and it's been debated for six and a half hours—this is May 16, 2011. This problem has been going on in Ontario for, let me see, seven, eight, nine years, and has been getting worse every year.

In 2009, I believe, there were studies published that showed that 50% of the tobacco in the butts outside of schoolyards and other public buildings was illegal tobacco. There are a huge number of areas that this impacts in the province of Ontario. This has been ongoing, and now the government has come up with a bill which I suspect may not be all that successful.

If we take a look at the illegal tobacco distribution as we see it in Ontario today, we see state trucks and tractor-trailers travelling around the province. These are large vehicles that are carrying contraband tobacco. They come out of one or two locations. They come out of Indian reserves—Six Nations and the Indian reserve in

eastern Ontario that sits on the border between Quebec, Ontario and the United States. Apparently, the RCMP cannot seize the trucks that move between Indian reservations, but if they're not moving between Indian reservations they can be seized, and for some reason they are not being seized.

This bill talks about the ability of police officers. When they find illegal cigarettes on an individual, they can phone a revenue agent and get permission to seize the cigarettes and fine the person from whom they're seizing the cigarettes. It seems like a rather difficult process to go through in order to achieve the removal of a pack of cigarettes, or half a pack of cigarettes, that an individual might be carrying on him at any given time. Meanwhile, the tractor-trailers and state trucks travel up and down our highways, seemingly unavailable to be pulled over and searched and the perpetrators charged.

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But aside from those rather obvious weaknesses in this bill, there are a number of other impacts that illegal cigarettes have on our society. Perhaps one of the most important and one of the most dastardly impacts they have is on young people. Young people find these cigarettes in vans, trunks of cars, pickup trucks, what have you, always parked near a schoolyard. Whether or not these can be found by police, whether or not they can be found by the RCMP, or whether or not they can be found by revenue agents seems to be up to some question, but almost every grade 8 or grade 9 student in Ontario knows where to find these vans. It seems to me that if they can buy a pack of cigarettes as easily as they can buy a pack of gum, that's probably not a good thing for the young people in Ontario, and I think the government knows this. I think it's a shame that this government has waited until the eighth year of its mandate to take action on this scourge that is taking place in Ontario.

It also teaches young people that there's a law for some things and there's not a law for other things. It doesn't teach them any respect in any general way for a law that operates in Ontario.

The other thing that comes to mind is that when you're buying illegal cigarettes from somebody who operates with immunity, or supposed immunity, near a schoolyard, it would seem to me that you could probably buy other things from that individual as well. He may not have them in stock, but I think you could probably buy just about whatever illegal drug you wanted to buy, for delivery at some later date or at some other location. Once you have a delivery system for illegal materials, it would seem to me that it would be fairly easy to expand the products that you're selling into other illegal activities, and that also would impact our young people in a very, very negative way.

It also has a significant impact on the taxpayers of Ontario. Every single taxpayer in Ontario is paying a price for illegal cigarettes. This government could have done something about that over the eight years that it has been in power in Ontario, over eight years where this problem has grown from being somewhat insignificant,

with perhaps 5%, 6%, 7% of cigarettes being smuggled or being illegal contraband cigarettes, to the point now where it represents almost 50% of the cigarettes in Ontario. The last number I saw, I think, was 48-point-something-something per cent of the cigarettes sold in Ontario were illegal tobacco. For taxpayers, that means a tremendous amount of lost revenue, perhaps \$1 billion of lost revenue.

Now, \$1 billion used to be a very significant part of our budget. When this government came to power—the last budget that we brought into this province, into this House, was \$68 billion. That was the budget for Ontario. Today, that budget has skyrocketed to \$124 billion, I think it was, last March. So \$1 billion is a smaller percentage of that budget, but it is still a very, very significant amount of money. You could build a very modern, say, 400-bed hospital, with that kind of money. Certainly, that kind of money would expand the Milton hospital to a point where it could actually handle the number of baby births that are occurring in Milton. That would be a good thing, if we could control that tax from the lost sale of cigarettes. It's had that very negative impact on taxpayers over those eight years, and growing in importance, where today it is slightly in excess—the numbers I've been given seem to be slightly in excess of \$1 billion. So every taxpayer in Ontario is paying a price for these illegal cigarettes that are being distributed across this province.

Contraband tobacco also has a tremendous impact on public security. It means that this unparalleled source of revenue from illegal or contraband cigarettes is flowing into the coffers of organized crime. First of all, I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to figure out that if you have illegal cigarettes being distributed across Ontario, you need a distribution system that is extremely well organized. That distribution system is rumoured to be organized by the Hells Angels in the distribution system they have had for other products. This illegal money from contraband tobacco is flowing into the coffers of that organization.

That organization is also involved in other illegal activities that speak to the cost of doing business. Their costs of doing business are reduced because they have further business to do. The more business they do, the lower their cost of distribution can be. So it has a tremendous impact on public security and the ability of people to fight organized crime. The more money that organized crime has, of course, the more sophisticated they can be. This huge amount of money that is flowing into the coffers of organized crime is a huge detriment to the people of Ontario and for the public security of the people of Ontario. That's a very negative impact on Ontario, and has been a growing negative impact over the last eight years, starting out at a rather insignificant level of less than 5% of the tobacco sold in Ontario and growing to the point where it now represents 50%, or very close to 50%, of the tobacco sold in Ontario.

It also has a very negative impact on convenience store operators in Ontario. Convenience store operators have been servicing Ontario for many years. This govern-

ment has put restrictions on how they sell cigarettes. You can't see them anymore; they have to be behind a curtain or behind a door. Those impacts, I think, have been rather negative. They've been rather incidental and very minimal, but nonetheless, convenience stores have seen a tremendous drop in their sale of cigarettes, which is a major income provider for them—it's a legal product being sold in Ontario in this case—and that has had a very negative impact on convenience store operators.

Those store operators have had a couple of issues. One, they were criticized years ago for supposedly selling cigarettes to minors, and they implemented a program that checks the ID of anyone who purchases tobacco products. In independent testing—someone going in trying to buy tobacco from a convenience store and being asked to show ID—I think that over 96% of tobacco sales were found to be legitimate, in that they did not sell to young people. You can compare that 96% and put it in perspective: The other place they tested was the LCBO, with an underage person trying to buy alcohol, and the success of a younger underage person buying alcohol in LCBO stores—they came out at an 86% level, significantly below the convenience stores level of checking ID and making sure that young people didn't buy tobacco in the case of convenience stores and alcohol in the case of the LCBO.

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So they did a very good job, in my estimation, of checking to make sure that young people weren't buying legal tobacco. Of course, the person who was selling illegal tobacco from the back of his van, out of the trunk of his car or the back of his pickup truck doesn't actually check for identification or age. If the money's on the counter, he takes the money and sells them the tobacco. That's how that system works, and that's what's so very, very wrong about it.

The convenience store association in Ontario has had tremendous negative impact from the sale of illegal tobacco, to the point where, last year, two convenience stores per day went out of business in Ontario—two convenience stores per day. That's a very significant rate. It's a very significant problem, and this government hasn't done anything about that, until the very last three weeks of their term of eight years that this problem has been a factor in this province. It's a growing problem, a growing crime, and it has had a growing impact on these people, whether it be young people, whether it be taxpayers, whether it be our security in the province, whether it be our honest merchants in our convenience stores.

It's also been a problem over the last eight years for the aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities are seen as being the site of distribution of this product. I don't think it takes anyone's imagination to understand that there are very, very few people—a very small percentage of the people—on a given reserve who would be impacted by this. They would all be impacted, but there would be very few of them who would be involved in the distribution of illegal cigarettes. That means that the vast

majority—I've heard estimates of 90% or 95%—of First Nations living on reserves are negatively impacted. They live in fear. They live in trepidation about what is going to happen to their children and what's going to happen to their lives as this illegal activity gains more and more ground and continues to have a larger and larger influence on the activities that take place on their reserve.

I would suggest to the government that some of the elements that have the greatest impact against them in a negative way when this scourge of illegal tobacco comes to their doorstep—whether it be manufacturing or whether it be transportation, no matter how it gets there, it has a very negative impact on the vast majority of First Nations who live on our reserves. I think that's also a great crime that this government hasn't done anything about.

I would suggest that the sixth area that has a negative impact on the people of Ontario is the impact that it has on our social fabric in Ontario. It means that the citizens of Ontario lose faith in their government's ability to enforce the law of the land and lose faith in their ability to protect individuals.

I come back to the case of Chartwell-Brown, the couple who was living on non-First Nations land, non-reserve land, just outside of Caledonia. They were living on the wrong side of the barricade. The Ontario Provincial Police failed to provide adequate protection for them. After two years or so of this treatment—two or three years, I think—they went to court, suing the OPP for lack of action. After two or three days in court, the Ontario government settled the issue by paying off Chartwell-Brown to drop the case. They were suing the government for \$7 million. We don't know what that settlement was, because the government made it secret.

Whatever Chartwell and Brown got in settlement was paid out of government revenues, and I would hasten to remind the government that all government revenues come out of the pockets of the taxpayers of Ontario. Whether it comes through gas tax or whether it comes through personal income tax or whether it comes through that lovely new issue that you have, the HST, the revenue, even the corporate sales taxes and business taxes, comes out of a portion of the profits of those businesses, and the profits of those businesses came from the pockets of Ontario taxpayers. So, one way or the other, those tax dollars came out of Ontario taxpayers' pockets.

I suggest to the government, as I have done before, that Ontario taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent and therefore deserve to know what that settlement with Chartwell-Brown was. To keep something like that a secret—it's like the Samsung contract. It's a secret. The way the minister is answering the questions in the House today and last week, I'm not sure that the minister knows what's in that contract. That contract with Samsung is secret. It supposedly deals with \$7 billion. One way or another, that \$7 billion has some impact on the people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario and the voters of Ontario. For that to be a secret contract and for the people of Ontario not to know how the government is

operating with that amount of money, a significant portion of the provincial budget, which I mentioned before is about \$124 billion, I think—\$7 billion is 6.25% of that total budget; 5.25%, I think—that’s a significant amount. Why this government has kept that secret, and how they would have the unmitigated gall to keep that secret, I don’t know. I don’t understand that kind of government. I think government should be open and respectful of taxpayers’ money.

To summarize, I would say that the government has acted very slowly on this. Now, all of a sudden, we have to go fast because we have a time allocation motion before us, so we have to hurry down the line and get this piece of legislation passed.

As has been pointed out in previous debates by this side of the House and by the third party, there are some serious loopholes in this piece of legislation as to whether or not it will have any positive impact on the flow of contraband tobacco. I think that anything that has a negative impact on the flow of contraband tobacco is probably a good thing, but I think we could be much more effective when we know that there are tractor-trailers coming out of certain places, and we know where those places are. The RCMP has lots of information on that that they’re willing to share with almost anyone. It’s in the papers every once in a while; you can read about it.

We think that those factories that manufacture at those shipping points that come across from the US—apparently 90% of it comes across from the US at one or two border points. It should be easy, or it shouldn’t be a huge difficulty, to shut some of that down. This government doesn’t seem to be able to do that, and that’s too bad for Ontario. It’s too bad for the young people of Ontario. It’s too bad for the taxpayers of Ontario. It has a negative impact. It’s too bad for the public security of Ontario. It has a tremendously negative impact, and it really is a crime as to what it’s doing to the convenience store operators—families, in many cases, running a small convenience store. They’re under huge pressure, with at least two stores a day going bankrupt or shutting down in Ontario. That has been going on for the last year and a half or so, and that’s a shame.

It has been a shame for aboriginal communities. As I mentioned, they’re perhaps one of the hardest hit, because they live in fear. They live in an area in which—and which I don’t understand—while a very few people on the reserves, as a percentage of the population that is on the reserves, are being negatively impacted, it’s also a shame as to what it’s doing to our social fabric.

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Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time. I look forward to further debate on this. I would look forward to further time debating it—perhaps we could strengthen the law—but this time allocation motion is going to stop all that later today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I’m pleased to have the opportunity to speak, first, to the time allocation motion

and, secondly, to the bill itself in the context of time allocation.

The bill itself, Bill 186, is entitled “illegal tobacco.” I think the gist of the story is that this government wants people across Ontario to believe that finally, after many, many years of doing nothing about the distribution of illegal tobacco, illegal cigarettes and black market cigarettes in the province, it is in fact doing something. After all, it’s just before an election, and that’s when you usually find these kinds of bills that have a fancy title and are intended to lead people to believe that something is going to be done.

Unfortunately, when you read this bill, there’s not much there. In fact, it’s fair to say there is next to nothing there. I would say that this legislation is again, shall we say, just a preparation-for-election bill. It’s not going to do anything substantive, and it’s not going to do anything meaningful. It will give Liberal candidates the opportunity to say, in the run-up to the election, “We passed a bill to deal with illegal cigarettes and illegal tobacco.” But in functional terms, it’s not going to do much.

That’s probably why we’re facing time allocation here. People understand that after this the Legislature might sit for four or five more days before we recess for the summer, and then there’s going to be an election. I think that one of the reasons we’re seeing time allocation on this bill, and not seeing the discussion and debate one would want to have on such a serious issue, is because the government just wants to get it through and really doesn’t care that there isn’t much substance to the bill. I think that’s the reason for time allocation.

The government says, “Look, it’s not much of a bill. It’s not going to do much.” The most substantive part of the bill is the title, which is intended to give the impression that the government is starting to take the problem of illegal tobacco and illegal cigarettes seriously. So, let’s just ram it through.

Well, I don’t think that’s a very good idea. I don’t think it’s a good idea, because what it does is create a precedent where you don’t have to have thoughtful reflection on legislation, you don’t have to have thoughtful analysis of the problems and thoughtful analysis of what needs to be done, and you don’t have to have thoughtful analysis about what the repercussions are going to be. You don’t have to have thoughtful analysis about what the impact will be on the public: what positives, what negatives, what’s going to happen here? I think that when you see this kind of stuff over and over again—and we’ve seen lots of it this spring—this is what leads to the public cynicism we see out there. This is what leads to people saying, “I just give up. I don’t want to pay attention, I don’t want to listen, I don’t want to watch, I don’t want to participate, because governments engage in this kind of silliness.”

It is, indeed, silly. There is not much in this bill that is going to do anything positive in terms of addressing the very serious problem of illegal cigarettes, illegal tobacco and all the health consequences that flow from that, and frankly some of the crime consequences that flow from

that. There's very little in this bill that is going to do anything about that.

But this kind of legislative exercise leads to unbelievable public cynicism, because, believe it or not, you can't treat voters and the public as if they're stupid. They see this stuff, and they know what it's about. They know it's just window dressing and completely superficial, and it's not going to do anything, and that very much leads to public cynicism.

So I think this time allocation order is wrong on so many counts and wrong because of the public cynicism that it leads to.

There's another problem with this bill, and it's a serious problem, and I suspect that's another reason why we're seeing the time allocation order. One of the serious issues in terms of the distribution of cigarettes in the province involves the provincial government having to sit down and work with First Nations, having to listen to the concerns and the issues of First Nation communities and having to respond to those issues and concerns.

Did the government, before it presented this bill, sit down and discuss and negotiate and consult with First Nations? Is there any track record indicating that the government, with integrity, with thoughtfulness beforehand, sat down with the great number of First Nations in this province who, in one way or another, may have stores or may have operations that are involved in the sale of cigarettes? The track record indicates that no such communications happened.

I know what this is going to lead to in terms of First Nations. First Nations are going to be pretty angry; they're going to be pretty upset. They're especially going to be very upset when they hear cabinet ministers from this government going from one end of the province to the other talking about, over and over again, the very special relationship that this government has with First Nations. I've heard this speech so many times. I've heard the announcements repeated over and over and over, ad nauseam, so many times. First Nations see this: an exercise of disrespect, an exercise of, "We don't care what you have to say. We don't even care to come and talk to you," and then the government wonders why First Nations get upset and become angry with this government and become cynical about this.

I expect another reason why we're seeing the time allocation order is that the government would like to just usher this through and hope that it gets as little public attention, as little time on the public radar screen, as possible, because, frankly, the process, the mechanism, whereby this legislation was brought before the Legislature is itself a complete embarrassment.

As somebody who has a significant number of First Nations in my constituency, I can say that First Nations are getting used to this. They saw the Far North Act, which has huge implications for First Nations—with no consultation. In fact, what they saw was even worse. They saw the Minister of Natural Resources fly into some remote First Nations, hold a 10-minute photo op, get back on the plane and fly out, and then come to the

Toronto media and say, "We held extensive consultations with First Nation communities." And that was done not once, not twice, but probably about eight times. We saw First Nations up here in the galleries, day after day after day, protesting that piece of legislation. We saw them on the front lawn of the Legislature and we saw them behind the building, again making the same point: that this government that claims to have this very special, this very amiable, this very respectful relationship with First Nations had done nothing of the sort. They, again, were really, really upset.

Most recently, we saw the government's proposed—because it still hasn't been passed yet—forest tenure legislation on forest tenure reform. I was amazed to get a long letter from Mr. Harry Bombay, the executive director of the First Nations forestry association for Canada, protesting that this government has presented this legislation without ever talking to First Nation communities, many of them involved in forestry operations of one kind or another, or many of them First Nations still living on the land, who have an aboriginal interest, if not a treaty interest, in what happens to the forests. The government presents the legislation without ever having engaged in any discussion whatsoever with those First Nations.

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Now we have this legislation. I think First Nation communities across Ontario must be getting the message right now from this government. What this government means by a "special relationship" is that the government can just ignore you, as they have done over and over and over again, over the last two or three years. But that is, I suspect, why we're seeing this legislation get time allocation: The government itself is embarrassed by the terrible process that was used to develop this legislation and bring it before the House without any consultation or discussion with First Nations who may or likely will be affected by the legislation—a terrible way to make laws. If you want people to lose respect for the law, if you want people to say, "That law isn't worth the paper it's printed on," then this is the way to do it. This is indeed the way to do it, because that is the end result of what you get from this kangaroo-court process that this government is engaged in with respect to this bill and which this government is engaging in in terms of using time allocation for the bill.

I just want to take a few minutes to talk a bit about the substance of the issue. The substance has some remarkable aspects to it. I remember—it was probably three years ago—that the government was patting itself on the back, saying, "Look: We've dramatically reduced smoking in the province, and we've dramatically reduced the consumption and sale of cigarettes in the province." If all you did was to go around to the corner stores and look at the cigarettes that they purchase from wholesalers and that they sell, and then look at the tax revenue, you could come to the conclusion that smoking has declined and the sale of cigarettes has declined. The government was promoting this and promoting this and promoting this.

However, some of the groups who actually do care about the integrity of the issue and do care about how

valid the statistics are on whether smoking is increasing, levelling off or declining finally took the government to task, saying, “Look: It doesn’t paint an honest picture if all you’re doing is looking at the sale of tobacco products from wholesalers to stores and then stores to the public, because that statistic ignores this huge sale of illegal tobacco products.” It ignores the tobacco products that come in from the United States, and we know that—look, some of the big tobacco companies were engaged in that process, and we know that now. Some of the big tobacco companies were literally producing cigarettes in Canada, shipping them across the border and then finding ways to get them back into Canada illegally and sell them illegally. We know that was happening, and I know it because I’ve had chiefs of First Nations in my constituency come to me and say, “We’re a bit worried about the sale of illegal tobacco products in our community. We’d like to see something done to better regulate this.” We know it’s happening.

Those people who really care about the integrity of the health statistics in terms of smoking know that it is a very, very serious problem. This is not 5% of the market; this is not 10% of the market; this is not 15% of the market. This is a lot more than that, such that the figures that the government was putting out in their claim to say that smoking was declining and consumption of cigarettes was declining are bogus. They don’t have any integrity to them. So this is a big problem

I’ve heard some of my Conservative colleagues talk. It’s especially a big problem in terms of students. Yes, you do see black market cigarettes, illegal cigarettes being marketed near high schools and near elementary schools. Yes, you see it in other forums as well, a well-organized program of selling cigarettes in this fashion. It’s out there, and anyone who wants to doubt it I think is clearly engaged in the game the government has been engaged in of closing their eyes and trying to ignore it.

This is a serious health problem, it is a serious problem in terms of organized crime, and it is a serious problem in terms of when governments pass legislation and then say that this is the law but just about everybody can see that the law is either being ignored or flouted. It is a very serious problem in terms of just public respect for the law and public order as well when this happens.

When you deal with legislation like this, the question you have to ask yourself is, is this legislation going to do anything about that? Is it going to do anything to make a substantive difference? And the fact of the matter is, when you actually look at the terms of the legislation, it’s not going to do much at all. I am almost tempted to say that the legislation and the time allocation order together are a completely bogus exercise, that it’s a waste of time of the Legislature and it’s a waste of time of the public of Ontario that the government is going to try to create an impression that something is actually going to be done here, because nothing is going to be done here.

This is what I call “show” legislation. You show it just before the election. You announce it and give it a fancy title, but it’s not going to do much. And all of this, this

kind of exercise and just about every part of it that we’ve seen so far, really does lead to a decline in public respect for this institution, public respect for the law, and a lack of public respect for the kinds of promotional campaigns that one often sees from governments from time to time: “We’re going to really do something about this issue.” I think what comes out of this is—unfortunately, on the part of the public, the end result is cynicism, that not much of anything is going to be done.

Will people vote for this legislation? They’ll vote for it. I’m sure people will vote for it. I’m sure it will pass the House. But again, the question is, is it going to do anything substantive? Is it going to actually ameliorate the serious situation that we find out there? No, it’s not.

Is it going to be workable in terms of First Nations? I don’t think so. I think potentially it’s going to create a whole lot of headaches with a number of First Nation communities across this province.

Is it going to do anything effective in terms of the peddling of illegal cigarettes in front of our schools, our high schools? I don’t think so. I don’t think so at all, but the legislation will pass because the government will say, “This is serious legislation to do something about illegal tobacco.” So people will vote for it, it will pass, but not much of substance will happen here, and that is sad. That is sad because I believe, for example, in terms of First Nations, the will exists and the desire exists to sit down and have a serious discussion about tobacco and illegal cigarettes and their distribution, and to do something about that. I think the will exists in First Nations to do something about that.

I think that the public will exists. My God, there’s been enough information on the health damage that cigarettes do, not only to the people who smoke but to the people who happen to be in the vicinity of smokers. I think there’s goodwill on the part of the public to do something. I think those groups who have lobbied and worked very hard in terms of cigarette smoking and in terms of tobacco products and trying to promote anti-smoking campaigns and different techniques of quitting smoking—I think there’s goodwill on the part of those people to do something. But I don’t think this legislation is going to meet any of the requirements, any of the tests of any of those people. And that’s sad; that is really sad.

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I think it’s sad from a law enforcement perspective. As anyone knows, if the law of the land says X, Y and Z are not permitted, but people continue to see X, Y and Z happening—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order: I don’t believe there’s a quorum present, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think this illustrates my point: Even government members don't take this legislation seriously. The government can't keep a quorum of members in the House.

Interjections.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Speaker, I'm here to debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm here to debate. It is a shame that the government can't keep a quorum in the Legislature for their own legislation. As I say again, it indicates the lack of seriousness that government members have for their own legislation in this instance.

But as I was saying, one of the issues that I think lawmakers have to confront is the scenario where you create, when you pass legislation that says X, Y and Z is not permitted, but then the public sees that X, Y and Z continue to happen—and not only do X, Y and Z continue to happen, X, Y and Z flourish. When governments create that kind of scenario, they are doing something which, in my view, is to the detriment of all of us. If government passes legislation that says X, Y and Z is not permitted, then government has the responsibility, in my view, to put the resources and the capacity behind the legislation to ensure that it is implemented and enforced. What we've seen repeatedly from this government on this issue are lots of statements and lots of pronouncements, just as we see in this legislation, but not much in the way of effective action. Once again, this leads to a very, very high level of political cynicism.

So I wish the government would take the bill back, take back its time allocation order, and actually sit down with First Nations and do some of the legwork that needs to be done on this issue; sit down with representatives of corner stores, who can also tell us about some of the legwork that needs to be done if this kind of legislation is going to be effective; sit down with those people who are charged with enforcing the laws to ask them what needs to be in the legislation in order to make it effective. And then take what has been recommended and do another round of consultation with all of those people who stand to be affected or who have an interest, and then bring the legislation to the House. But bring it to the Legislature and let's have some meaningful debate and meaningful discussion, rather than simply tabling the legislation, using the minimum debate time and then using time allocation to ram it through the House.

That would be really meaningful legislative work, and it would be meaningful legislative work that would probably lead to a public that is more supportive and a public that is less cynical. The government might even be able to trust their numbers the next time they announce that smoking has declined or the sale of cigarettes has declined or the consumption of tobacco products has declined. They might even be able to trust their own numbers then, and the public might be able to trust the numbers.

I would hope that the government would take the legislation back, recognize how flawed it is, recognize that it's not going to do much in a substantive way to tackle the problem that it's supposed to tackle and recognize that it's going to lead to even more public cynicism, because it is so badly drafted and it is so ineffectual in what it proposes to do. Let's do it right. That's what we should be doing and that's why New Democrats will vote against this time allocation order, because frankly it does nothing positive and it will have, in our view, a lot of negative consequences.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the time to address this time allocation order on Bill 186, the tobacco legislation. I just want to talk a little bit about why, when here we are in the dying days of the McGuinty government—this is an 11th-hour introduction of legislation. If you look over the last eight years of any initiative or lack of initiative or lack of action from this government, there seems to be some evidence that the McGuinty war on tobacco is failing. It's somewhat of a phony war.

At present, we're debating a time allocation bill with respect to a revenue bill with respect to smoking. The revenue minister brought in the legislation to deal with smoking, not the health minister, not the health promotion minister, so it's a bit of a phony war. I guess it's a catchy phrase with the media to say, "We're going to declare war on the economic activity, the social activity, the behavioural activity of using tobacco," primarily in the form of cigarettes; less so, snuff or chewing tobacco or cigars. Much of the impetus has been to strip the activity of previously held traditional rights.

It looks like this government has lost interest in smoking and health. Maybe the polling indicates that there are no votes in this area. Just a few minutes ago, the government was guilty of not even having a quorum in the House. That's a very clear measure—it's recorded in Hansard—of the lack of interest. There may be one member at the back who was sitting here enraptured with the last presentation—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been sitting here the whole time.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Oh, here's another member—two members who couldn't get their fellow MPPs to tough it out and, at minimum, meet a quorum, given the number of seats you hold.

The issue of smoking has gone a long way, in part thanks to some well-funded zealots, people with more commitment to this than the government members. They feel that no matter what public policy is imposed or what accomplishments are made, it's never enough. We remember the days of no smoking in government buildings, no smoking in workplaces, no smoking on airplanes. That was granted. Then the Ontario Liberals created a smoke-free Ontario; I think that was back in May 2006.

Again, since 2006, there have been presentations made to the McGuinty government by people like Michael

Perley and Garfield Mahood, I am sure, who continue to push forward. I've seen very little action on that front.

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Premier McGuinty, the health minister and the rest of the Liberal caucus have led us to believe that smoke-free legislation will curb smoking, keep people out of harm from second-hand smoke and, ultimately, save lives. If this is the case, I question why the smoke-free legislation back then really didn't provide any incentives or funding of any significance at all for smoking-cessation programs, let alone compensation programs, for example, for tobacco growers who were forced into bankruptcy.

We know that several years ago the federal government came through with something like \$300 million for compensation for farmers who had been put out of business. This was not the case with the McGuinty government. Within the same day, they announced—it was an agricultural funding program—that they would not harmonize with the federal government. There was no 60-40 share on that particular program, and now we're left with a situation that, gosh, this is three or four budgets later and it's pretty hard to go back to budgets of past years to rectify some of these wrongs.

The truth of the matter is that the provincial and federal governments don't want Canada's six million smokers to quit overnight—that's not happening anyway—because of the money that still accrues from the legal trade. I'm not sure, but perhaps across Canada, with the provinces, there's something like \$8 billion a year. You'll never hear talk by a government member opposite about making tobacco illegal.

We see a bill today. It's a revenue bill. This particular government is addicted to that source of revenue from an addictive substance, tobacco. Here's the kicker: Even if all of Canada's tobacco farmers were forced out of the fields, the hands of state would continue to be greased. Instead of collecting taxes from Ontario-grown product that has been grown by Ontario farmers for well over 80 years, now they can collect them from offshore import sales, both legal and illegal, coming from countries like China, India and Brazil.

Nobody argues that smoking tobacco is good for you, and with the growing incidence of government interference in a somewhat superficial way while ignoring the gigantic elephant in the room—the presence of contraband, the presence of illegal tobacco that, under the McGuinty government, has grown upward of something like 50% of the market now, and nobody's measuring—you're not going to get a government employee willing to sit in a tobacco manufacturing facility in a native community, for example. Government workers don't do that. They're not trained to do that. They don't understand the business. They don't understand the tobacco manufacturing business, let alone the processing business, let alone the retailing business, let alone the agricultural side of it.

Here's a quote from the Sunday Sun, October 31, 2004—Linda Williamson stirred up some interest, referring to the McGuinty government: “We have a strange conception of individual rights and public health. Raw

fish, cigarettes and pit bulls are too risky for Ontarians, but you can sleep on freezing sidewalks and suck back cooking sherry for as long as you please....”

Most parents understand the rebellion, the resentment that can result when you attempt to force children to do something. As adults, we're really no different. When price is involved and you continually jack up taxes as this government has been wont to do over the last eight years, you have now created a situation where the legal trade, which pays taxes on a very highly taxed item, is in no way coming close to being able to compete with the illegal trade. Government has proven that they cannot compete with the illegal trade; police forces have not been given the resources to compete with the illegal trade. As a result, McGuinty's Ontario is one of the few jurisdictions anywhere in the world that has lost control of the tobacco market.

If their aim was less smoking, we do see failure. It's difficult to quit as it is, in a controlled market, as we see in so much of the rest of the world. When close to half the tobacco is illegal, when young people are not asked to show ID when they pick up cigarettes to put on their handlebars to take into their elementary school—they're not asked how old they are. Any modicum of force that has been applied through policing obviously hasn't worked; if anything, it has exacerbated the problem. I guess we're just kind of scratching the surface over the last eight years, treating some of the symptoms and continuing to go through the motions and get the odd headline here and there.

There's a distinction between control and abolition. This government won't abolish tobacco. The legislation that we're debating sets the bar very low. Even in the title, it talks about reducing. It doesn't talk about eliminating something that virtually did not exist when these people were elected eight years ago. Why would legislation be brought in to reduce something that's illegal, something that virtually did not exist before? Why would they do that?

Again, I don't know what's going on behind the scenes. We know that there is a very significant criminal element involved in this business, an element that no employed politicians—there are some things that are going to have to be found out about this business, because we're dealing with organized crime. We're dealing with some very, very significant players.

I think of Six Nations in my area. I know the member for Brant has 200 smoke shacks in his riding alone. That's one Liberal riding, 200 smoke shacks. That's a disaster. Six Nations' council, just to try and peck away—they have difficulty, just like McGuinty, getting rid of smoke shacks. They have difficulty with minors working in these smoke shacks. They have a policy department. They don't know what to do to stop minors from working in tobacco retailing. This was before council quite recently—I'm quoting from the Turtle Island News, where concerns were brought forward. They've been working on some options. They're probably not getting any help from the McGuinty govern-

ment. I don't think a McGuinty government member or bureaucrat would wade into the Six Nations tobacco boondoggle—like I say, 200 smoke shacks; I don't know, maybe 20, maybe 30 manufacturing operations, something this government turns a blind eye to.

They've presented some options, trying to work with the school system, trying to provide bigger incentives than the money—the money that's there because of the McGuinty government—that lures children out of school so they sit in a smoke shack all day, selling illegal cigarettes. They're not sure they can do anything under the Indian Act, if the council has authority to pass this kind of legislation.

A third option: They could legally establish licensing requirements through a licensing provision, to allow youth to work in these establishments that sell tobacco. Licensing: Again, how do you enforce it? How would you enforce that on something like Six Nations? I really regret the fact that this government has let these people out to dry.

I think my colleague Mr. Hillier would like to speak a bit to this motion, Speaker, and I will defer to the honourable member down the way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

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Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to engage in this debate. It's unfortunate that the Liberals have not engaged in debate on their own bill, but they do have a quorum here now.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River said the government was engaging in silliness. I think he's being a little bit polite in saying that. This bill is really a pretext. This bill does absolutely nothing for the real and true problems with illegal and contraband tobacco in this province, but goes after the person who may have a few illegal cigarettes in their possession.

In my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, in the county of Lanark—there are no native reserves in Lanark county. However, there are at least two smoke shacks in Lanark county, one just outside of Perth, on Highway 43, and another one just outside of Silver Lake Provincial Park, on Highway 7. When I drive to Toronto, down number 7, I pass another illegal cigarette shop in the Minister of Education's riding. These are smoke shops that are not on native reserves, and this government does absolutely nothing against those smoke shops.

I'll relay a little story. I remember once—a gentleman owns a small service station and sold cigarettes. I dropped in to see him one day and he said, "I just got visited by the tobacco enforcement police from the province"—to see if he was complying with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which of course he was. It was the 10th inspection that that little service station had endured in the past few weeks. He was really outraged, and he said to these enforcement officers, "Why aren't you going down the road to Silver Lake, to the native smoke shop on Highway 7?" And they said to this fellow, "Well,

we've been told not to go there." That's why this bill is a pretext. It's not going to actually do anything. This government is still going to be fearful of policing illegal smoke shops, but now bring the hammer down on somebody who has a couple of cigarettes.

This government ought to know—it does know—that the reasons why we have this problem are because of high taxation, which has created a profitable market, profitable for the black market and for organized crime to be engaged in this activity, and also their unwillingness to enforce the laws of the land today when it comes to native smoke shops. That's why we have this problem. This bill fails to address those problems. We're still going to have high taxation, which creates that black market, and this unwillingness to go after the illegal smoke shops.

I'd like the government to tell this House why you are not going after the smoke shops on Highway 7 and why you are not going after the smoke shops on Highway 43. Why are you going after the fellow who has a few cigarettes while you leave the whole festering problem untouched? That's what you're doing: leaving it untouched. You have no interest in actually eliminating contraband tobacco. It's now approaching 50% of all the cigarette sales in this province, and this government still does nothing. It's not silliness; it's a pretext.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Ms. Smith—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hey, whoa. That's why I'm standing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, there's a different way to say it than just "whoa." I take it the member for Timmins–James Bay would like to speak.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for the "Hey, whoa."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, that's all right. I'm just fooling around. The floor is yours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I just apologize for how I got your attention. I was just coming around the corner when I was looking at where we're at. I've got about 10, 15 minutes to get on the record in regard to some of this, and I just wanted to take the opportunity.

It's pretty clear that the government is becoming more and more engaged in the whole exercise of time allocation. It bothers me, and I think it bothers most members in the House, especially at a time when the opposition is not being very oppositional. You will note that with most of the bills that have come through the House, there has been fairly good agreement among the House leaders in order to deal and come to terms with—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because it's good government, eh, Gilles?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, if it's good government, Minister of Education, why are we time-allocating, I guess is my—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Transportation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, sorry. Transportation. What did I say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Education.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I can't get over it, because you were—you know I always had. Okay, there we go.

Anyway, I just want the members of the House to understand that I think a lot of us increasingly are getting a little more apprehensive and extremely unhappy with the use of time allocation in this place.

When I first came to the Legislature back in 1990, time allocation was something that was used very, very seldom. In the past, when I first got here, there were bills that came before the House that had no limit on speeches. You were able to speak an entire afternoon if you wanted to. There was no limit on how long you were going to speak, just the limit that you could only speak once. Even in that particular system, you didn't have time allocation as you have today. In that system, you had a certain understanding among the parties that there were particular members of the House who may have an interest in a particular bill.

For example, if a bill came up that was on education, certain members who were predisposed and very interested in the issue of education would get up and speak probably more than some others and, yes, would take the floor for longer periods of time. But it was in order to express their thoughts on a particular issue and try, at second reading, to get the government and the rest of the members of the assembly thinking about what that member was interested in doing once the bill got to committee.

I've got to say that time allocation was something that was very seldom done. Over the years, every government has had a hand in changing the standing orders around this place to where we are today, where time allocation is almost an automatic issue in this House: a debate for seven and a half hours and automatically you go into time allocation. I guess I would make the following point: Is that necessary?

First of all, there has been very little in the way of hard opposition on the part of the opposition parties, either the New Democrats or the Conservatives, on many of the bills that are before us, because in many cases we actually agree with the bill but there are some issues. For example, on this particular bill having to do with the issue of contraband tobacco sales, I think nobody in the House is opposed to the general idea. However, there are some parts of the bill that need to be discussed and amended in committee, and I raised those issues during my time in debate last week.

But here we are, on a bill that most people agree with, and the government comes to time allocation. My guess is that this particular bill was probably going to end in less time than it would take us to time-allocate. So you say to yourself, "Why is it that the government chooses to do time allocation a whole bunch of times when they really don't have to?"

I think it has become what I and others talk about in this place: The House is becoming less and less able to

control debate in this place, compared to the power of the Premier and the unelected staff who work for the Premier, when it comes to what goes through this House. I think that is wrong for a couple of reasons. One, who woke up and made the Premier God? I don't care if it's Dalton McGuinty or anybody else; he's just another elected official who happens to be the head of the government. Yes, he's the Premier of Ontario and, yes, he should have a say. But that say should always be tempered by what the public has to say and what the representatives of the people have to say in this place.

So you see a legislative agenda come before the House, and there's a decision made even before we come into the House: We have so many hours for debate, and we are going to get so much business done so that we can say we've done all these wonderful things. They manage the time at the beginning of the session in such a way that they know how much they can get through by use of time allocation. I think that's too bad. I think that's rather sad, because what ends up happening is that we don't end up making the kinds of changes to legislation that need to be made in order to make it work.

I was at the association of police boards in Niagara on the weekend, along with Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Garfield—I forget the riding names; I apologize for that, Mr. Speaker—and one of the issues that came up was how legislation is drafted in this House. Quite often, it is faulty because of the process we go through in this House. We don't give it proper time for debate in the House, and more importantly, we don't give it proper time in committee. This is something we as New Democrats have been looking at under the leadership of Andrea Horwath: How as a government do you ensure that, yes, the government has the ability to pass its agenda? Clearly, in an election the governing party, the party that wins the most seats, has been given a mandate to pass their agenda and that agenda should be allowed to happen. If it's the case of a majority government, they should have the right to do so. But how do you temper that with the ability of making sure that you have proper review of the legislation so that you can actually make the legislation do what it was intended to do in the first place?

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There lies the problem when you have short debates, when you have debates like this. I would argue that this particular bill probably was going to end in another day of debate, two at the max. Then allow it to go to committee and to do the work that has to be done on committee. I think we could have ended up with a much, much better process at the end—not only process but, more importantly, a much better product in the end. So I say to the government across the way, time allocation is not necessarily the best of ideas.

The other thing, and I've spoken to this before, is the need to figure out how we make our committees work. Again, when we draft legislation, whether it be a private member's bill by an individual member or a bill by a minister through the government, I think that the com-

mittees should play a more important role than they do today. We should allow bills to go into committee, and not just for the two or three days that we see now. This particular bill in regard to the contraband tobacco act is going to go into committee for one day and come back out again. That hardly gives an opportunity for the public to think about what we're trying to do here, to give it some rational thought and then to give presentations to the committee so that we can make sure that we look at, does this work in the end? Does it achieve what you want to achieve? Is it doing it in the right way? Is there a balance to what's going on? If you don't allow bills to go into committee for a proper amount of time, I believe that's where you end up.

Again, when I first got here in 1990, the practice in this place was that if a bill was introduced in the fall, there was a lengthy second reading debate if it was a controversial bill. If it wasn't a controversial bill, you probably had, you know, somewhere around three or four debates on the particular bill. But here's the point: It went to committee and it didn't come back until the next spring.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Weeks of hearings.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yeah, it used to go for weeks of hearings, as my good friend Mr. Arnott said. He's from Wellington-Halton Hills.

The bill would go into committee, it would be there for weeks and it would travel across the province. I think that was a good thing because it forced members to listen to what people had to say and to try to amend bills in such a way that the legislation reflected what we heard.

Traditionally, what happened when I first got here was that the bill would come into the House in the fall. There would be a moderate to lengthy debate, depending on the controversy of the bill. The bill would eventually pass second reading. If the government had a controversial bill, they made sure to introduce it at the beginning of the fall session so that it could be done by the end of the fall session. Then in the intersession it would go out to committee, and sometimes it would even go back out to committee in the following intersession, in the summer, if the bill really needed it.

I was in on some bills around changes to the Planning Act, which is a very complex piece of legislation that has all kinds of ramification for people as that goes through, as well as the sustainable forestry development act. That went into committee and was in committee for a fairly long period of time before it eventually came back for third reading debate. But the point was, the committee was charged with looking at the bill and trying to amend the bill in such a way that it was strengthened.

I remember those particular bills, the Planning Act and the sustainable forestry development act. There were meaningful discussions at committee on the part of the public and committee members from all parties. There was meaningful dialogue at clause-by-clause because you didn't time-allocate the clause-by-clause; you actually had a discussion. The varying points of view were listened to and the committee tried to come to terms with what

was going to be workable in the end. The legislation that would come back before us for third reading had been pretty well thought through, pretty well vetted and fairly well amended so that it ended up doing what it should do.

Was the system perfect? Absolutely not. I'm sure members of this House can get up and talk about a particular bill at some time in the past that may not have been as good as it had to, but the point was, people had an opportunity to participate and, more importantly, the legislators had an opportunity to do their jobs.

I think where we're at now is, the government brings these bills into the House, we spend seven and a half hours of debate and, boom, it's out for time allocation when it doesn't really need to be. I just wanted to take the time in order to ensure that, in the end, the government heard that, because they're getting more into the habit of time-allocating.

We know that there's going to be a general election come October 6. Whoever the government is after October 6, this is advice that we need to listen to, if it's New Democrat, if it's Conservative or, God forbid, it's Liberal—and I say that wide openly because I come from a part of the province, my friends, where it's not a very good thing to be Liberal. But the point is that I hope that the next government is going to look at how we're able to strengthen the role of committees so that members are able to do their legislative duties in this place in a way that gives good critique to bills so that we can actually get better bills at the end of the day.

I hope that we don't end up time-allocating everything. Yes, I understand that if there's a majority government come October 6, the government is going to have the right to pass their agenda. I understand that. But there needs to be, also, an ability for the opposition to play its role. Our role is to look at bills, to critique them and try to find ways to make those bills work. If we followed that process, we'd be better off.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think your time is up. Is it not?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All right. Just wait until we get the clock up.

The member for Nipissing-Pembroke.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There is no time. There we go. We've established that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You gave me hope, Speaker, and you snatched it away from me.

Perhaps on a point of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On a point of order: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to seek unanimous consent to allow us to use the government's time because they don't seem to want to speak to their own motion.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I heard a no already.

Ms. Smith has moved government order number 75. 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 10-minute bell.

I have been handed a deferral slip in proper order. This vote will be deferred until after question period tomorrow afternoon.

Vote deferred.

TAXATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that to make life easier for Ontario families and help our economy remain strong, Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth, as reaffirmed in the 2011 budget, removes 90,000 Ontarians from the income tax rolls, provides 93% of Ontarians with a permanent personal income tax cut, maintains the harmonized sales tax at the current rate and provides \$12 billion in tax relief for families and \$4.8 billion in tax relief for businesses; and

Recognizes that with Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth, the economy is turning the corner by creating more than 293,000 new jobs since the global recession; and

Rejects the introduction of a carbon tax as a measure that would hurt Ontario's economic growth; and

Rejects an increase to the HST rate or a decrease to the rate that would benefit the wealthiest Ontarians the most, take \$3 billion out of health care and education funding and harm Ontario's economic recovery.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 74. Further debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure today to join in the debate on motion 74, reaffirming Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth, making life easier for Ontario families and helping our economy remain strong.

When the Minister of Finance tabled Ontario's budget in March, he pointed to the many positive signs in the economy. Jobs and growth are both coming back; the economy is improving. We've made strategic investments in education, strategic investments in health care, and we have been able to lay the foundation for a future that shows increased productivity and, of course, a future that shows a better quality of life for all of the people in Ontario.

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It's true: Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow. Our government has a realistic plan, an achievable plan, and a plan that will secure the prov-

ince's long-term financial sustainability. We are determined to protect the front-line services for the people of Ontario. We believe that a strong economy that creates and protects jobs is essential to fulfilling that commitment.

Our Open Ontario plan to make the province more competitive is working. Our economy is getting stronger every day. Our government is continuing to focus on a number of key areas that are helping to strengthen the economy every day. Those key areas include eliminating the deficit; reforming the delivery of public services, protecting the gains that we've already made in our educational and health care systems; and, of course, continuing to make life a little bit easier every day for the people of Ontario and for Ontario families. The McGuinty government is supporting the province's economic recovery and ensuring the lasting prosperity of this province. We have reported six consecutive quarters of economic growth, and that is a sign of progress.

This province's greatest strength is its people. It's their talent, it's their drive and it's their relentless determination to succeed that makes Ontario so strong. We are committed to making Ontario even stronger and protecting the gains that we've made together.

Our government recognizes that our tax plan for jobs and growth is essential to making their lives easier for the people of Ontario. The measures announced in the 2011 Ontario budget reaffirm that very commitment. Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth is ensuring sustained economic growth and job creation by significantly improving Ontario's tax competitiveness. The plan is providing tax relief to Ontarians by about \$12 billion over three years. To further assist Ontario households, our government is providing about \$1.4 billion annually in additional assistance to low- to moderate-income people through the Ontario sales tax credit, through the Ontario energy and property tax credit and through the northern Ontario energy credit.

We're also combining the payment of these three refundable credits by creating the Ontario Trillium benefit. Starting in July 2012, we plan on delivering on the combined payments monthly, instead of quarterly, just to make it that much easier for low- to moderate-income families to manage their household budgets.

As the recent job numbers from Statistics Canada show, our tax plan for jobs and growth is helping to create good new jobs for our families. In April alone, Ontario's employment jumped by almost 55,000 new jobs, and the unemployment rate declined by 0.2 percentage points. We've now regained 114% of the jobs lost during the recession, and 95% of those are full-time. Jobs in Ontario are coming back at a faster rate than in other jurisdictions around the world.

The McGuinty government has also cut personal income taxes and introduced a wide variety of tax credit and benefits that put money right back into the pockets of the people of Ontario. We've introduced several tax cuts and other benefits, again, just to make life that much easier for the people of Ontario, and these include the

Ontario clean energy benefit. This is providing families, small businesses and farms 10% off of their electricity bills. The children's activity tax credit is giving families \$50 per child, or \$100 per child with a disability, each year.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit is giving seniors up to \$1,025 and non-seniors up to \$900 to help with household costs. The northern Ontario energy benefit is providing relief to eligible northerners of up to \$200 per family and \$130 per single person. The Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant is providing eligible senior homeowners with assistance with their property taxes of up to \$500 each year. The Ontario child benefit is helping over a million children, and that's by providing low- and middle-income families with up to \$1,300 each year.

The Ontario sales tax credit is a permanent \$260 credit for every low- and middle-income adult and child. Michael Oliphant from the Daily Bread Food Bank said that the sales tax credit was sensible and forward-looking "and could become an important long-term piece of the economic security puzzle for poor people in the future."

Furthermore, with the changes we've made, 93% of taxpayers are paying less income tax, and 90,000 low-income Ontarians are no longer paying personal income tax. In fact, the average family in Ontario is getting an income tax cut of \$355 this year and every year going forward.

Through all of these measures, our government continues to make life just that much easier for the people of Ontario. Of course this was confirmed by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in its paper that it released called Not a Tax Grab After All. Andrew Mitchell stated that, after looking at the numbers, "The interests of the poor are relatively well protected...."

Our plan for the economy is all about giving Ontario families and businesses what they need to succeed. With the HST, the amount of tax on 83% of goods stayed the same, and consumers are benefiting from \$730 million in annual point-of-sale exemptions. The HST is also providing more than \$4.8 billion in business tax relief over three years to make Ontario a more attractive place for business to invest and to create jobs in this process.

With the HST we are creating a tax environment where businesses can thrive, where businesses can innovate and be competitive in the global economy while passing along savings to consumers through lower prices. A letter signed by 32 prominent economists and professors had this to say: "The HST will enhance competitiveness, encourage new investment and create jobs. It represents sound public policy."

Consumers are already benefiting from the effects of the pass-through of HST savings. By December 2010, an estimated two-thirds of business savings from the HST had already been passed on to consumers through lower prices. When the HST is fully phased in, it will also result in the removal of about \$4.5 billion a year in embedded taxes that are paid by businesses. Under our new tax plan, our local businesses are enjoying signifi-

cant savings. The typical Ontario restaurant is paying 67% less in provincial, corporate and sales taxes; a manufacturer is saving 89%; and a software publisher is saving 58%. This means that Ontario entrepreneurs and small businesses can increase their investments, can hire more employees and, of course, can continue to prosper.

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The reduction in the tax burden on new business investment will also increase investment in Ontario by \$47 billion and create nearly 600,000 net new jobs by 2020.

Ian Howcroft, from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, emphasizes the ongoing benefits of our tax plan for the economy. Ian Howcroft had this to say: "The combination of tax measures including the corporate tax reductions and the HST will help drive economic growth and ultimately job creation in Ontario. These were bold initiatives at a time when such actions were desperately needed to avoid catastrophe." So we thank Ian for his comments. With all of these benefits for Ontario businesses and Ontario families, it's no wonder that our tax plan is supported by leading economists and business groups, as well as poverty activists and left-leaning policy research institutes alike.

Our motion that we are debating here today clearly states that the McGuinty government rejects an increase to the HST rate. Our motion also rejects a decrease to the HST.

Some members of the opposition have suggested we should reduce the HST by one percentage point and find other ways to reduce the deficit. This approach would require deep cuts to crucial public services and, of course, would benefit the wealthiest people in Ontario and, at the same time, harm Ontario's economy.

Others might choose to slash benefits for our low-income people, let our infrastructure age and allow our universities and colleges to fall into disrepair. In fact, a one-point cut in the HST is about the same as \$3 billion in provincial revenues each year. Those in opposition who would suggest cutting revenue by \$3 billion each year would mean that those in opposition would need to lay off teachers. They would need to reduce the number of doctors in Ontario. They would need to eliminate funding for nurses. We know from past experience that across-the-board cuts do not work.

I lived the Rae days. I walked the picket line under a Mike Harris government. History has shown that they've done it before, and they will do it again. We choose instead to protect jobs, to protect our vital public services and, of course, to protect our economic recovery.

Neither of the two opposition parties have committed to repealing the HST if elected. In fact, the Ontario PC Party supported tax harmonization until the day that it was introduced. In March 2009, the leader of the official opposition had this to say: "We understand how that (single sales tax) can help the economy." The very next month, he is quoted as saying, "I agree that there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate taxes and policies and collect two separate groups of sales taxes."

Furthermore, our tax reform was both supported and encouraged by the official opposition's federal cousins, including Jim Flaherty, John Baird and Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In fact, even John Tory has come out in support of the HST. This past February, John Tory had this to say: The HST is "good economic and tax policy if we want to create jobs in the province of Ontario ... it took some courage to do it."

As for the NDP, they say they oppose our tax plan, despite support from food banks and other poverty support groups. At least one member from the NDP caucus has admitted that people are better off under our new tax system. The member from Beaches–East York is recently quoted, and I quote directly what the member from Beaches–East York had to say: "The tax burden has gone down on everyone, in spite of what people think. You know, taxes have gone down, literally on all income groups."

If voters have any concerns about an increase to the HST, they should look no further than the NDP. This party still has a request in to the Premier asking to raise the sales tax by 1%. Despite campaigning on removing the HST from energy, the NDP government in Nova Scotia increased the HST in that province by two points. Furthermore, the NDP has said that we should raise the corporate income tax paid by local Ontario businesses.

Our motion also rejects the introduction of a carbon tax. Our government has been very clear: We do not support a carbon tax as it would harm our economy and put our recovery at risk. Any suggestions made by the official opposition otherwise are simply unfounded. Ultimately, they seem to be grasping at straws.

The official opposition wants to cut the clean energy industry in Ontario, putting thousands of people out of work and driving away new investment. The Conservatives want to stop full-day kindergarten in its tracks, creating a two-tiered school system. And they will cut \$3 billion to \$6 billion from health care and education to pay for a decrease to the HST.

Since 2003, our government has always chosen to preserve and safeguard the quality of life for the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government continues to improve the fundamentals: That's education, that's health care, that's our infrastructure, that's our electricity and lower taxes. Reliable public programs and new business opportunities continue to support a strong economy.

We've modernized Ontario's tax system. We've rebuilt Ontario's rundown electricity system. Who would forget the blackouts in the summer of 2003 just before we formed government with the neglect of the opposition to rebuild the electricity system and the education and health care systems? We've kick-started our clean energy sector and we've protected the automotive industry.

These are real results. They've put Ontario on a stronger competitive footing, and we continue to create more opportunities for Ontario families and businesses.

Our plan to help the people of Ontario through the recession and build a stronger future is working. Of course, that's why I urge all those today in attendance

and throughout this debate to agree to the motion reaffirming Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth, making life easier for Ontario families and helping our economy remain strong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A pleasure to join this debate after a very successful blue blitz on Friday, where the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus and candidates travelled the province to talk about this government's plan to raise taxes yet again, if Ontarians are to give them another renewed mandate, which, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, after our travels in 60 different communities with our leader, Tim Hudak, and I believe 23 members of the Ontario PC caucus—and even more PC candidates, we're hearing—is not going to be the case. They will not be re-elected.

I want to start by reading a quote from Dalton McGuinty on April 4, 2011, from Hansard: "[A] very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past."

Now let's talk about Dalton McGuinty's record, because it will go a long way to predicting what the future holds if Ontario re-elects Dalton McGuinty again. Before the 2003 election, Dalton McGuinty emphatically denied he would increase taxes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I am reminded that we are to be careful with using names. Offices, we can use. Please. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Premier McGuinty emphatically denied he would raise taxes. On September 11, 2003, prior to that year's election—and I know that my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will remember this—Premier McGuinty signed a pledge called the taxpayer protection promise. Let me read the pledge into the record. It read, "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will: Not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the ... consent of Ontario voters...."

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We all remember those commercials, the ones he ran more than 200 times during the election. We all know that signing that pledge helped get Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government elected, and we all know what happened next. The minute he got the keys to the Premier's office from Ernie Eves, down the hall from this very chamber, Dalton McGuinty treated his word like it was nothing. His solemn promise to the people of Ontario meant nothing to him.

He brought in, at that time, the health tax. Of course, I wasn't a member of provincial Parliament at that time; John Baird, the current House leader in Parliament, was. At that time, he called Mr. McGuinty and his finance minister of the day a name I'm not able to say in this chamber, because it was the single largest tax grab in the history of Ontario, taking \$3 billion a year out of the pockets of Ontario families in the name of health care when not a single penny of that tax goes into health care; it only goes into general revenue.

I have here, in my hands, a chart about how much the health tax costs Ontario families. Those people making \$21,000 a year are paying \$60 a year in health tax. From \$25,000 to \$36,000, people are paying \$300 a year. At \$36,500, people are paying \$330. The list goes on. People being paid between \$38,500 and \$48,000 are being forced to pay \$450 in a tax that is not going to health care. Those making \$48,100 are forced to pay \$475. Those being paid a salary of \$48,000 to \$72,000 are being forced to pay \$600, and those from \$72,000 to \$200,000 are being asked to pay \$750 to the government of Ontario for their sewer fund each year. Those making over \$200,600 a year are asked to pay \$900. Can you imagine what effect this cost has had on Ontario families who are working hard to play by the rules and are being forced to pay more and more but get less out of this government?

If it weren't bad enough from 2003 to 2007, in the 2007 election campaign, Mr. McGuinty did it again. Before the 2007 election, he promised that he would not lower taxes, but he wouldn't raise them either. I remember those ads. I was, at that point, already elected for a year and a half. I was going into my first re-election campaign, and I remember Dalton McGuinty looking at the television audience in his ads and saying, "I won't raise your taxes either." What did he do? He told his critics, "You're wrong." In fact, when told that his critics wouldn't believe him, he said, "They're wrong. They're wrong. They're wrong." But after that vote, and without warning, he broke his promise again and brought in the \$3-billion HST tax grab. The HST on hydro bills is one of the reasons those bills are increasing as we speak.

Let me talk a little bit about the items Mr. McGuinty brought in an 8% increase on—items that Ontario families are forced to pay on; thank you, Mr. McGuinty, for this tax grab. Dry cleaning services; cleaning services; heating and hydro; Internet access fees; home service calls by electricians, plumbers, carpenters; maintenance and repair to furnaces, leaky faucets, bathrooms, toilets, electrical wiring, etc.; landscaping; lawn care; and private snow removal: All have seen an 8% increase in the last year due to Dalton McGuinty's greedy \$3-billion HST tax grab.

Taxis, campsites and domestic air, rail and bus travel originating in Ontario have seen an increase. Magazines purchased by subscription thankfully hadn't seen changes but were about to go up, except that thankfully there were protests from that industry. Home renovations saw an 8% increase at the same time the federal government was telling Canadians it was okay to renovate their homes, and kick-started the economy by giving the home renovation tax credit. After that tax credit was gone, not only was it gone, but then this government raised that by 8%, making it that much more unaffordable for the people of Ontario to do home renovations, causing a few things, might I add. It caused people to go out of business, and it also caused some home renovators to go underground. Who knows how much revenue the government of Ontario has lost as a result of that?

We've seen, in recent days, the price of gasoline go up exorbitantly. It's been challenging. For the job that we do in this chamber, to travel around the province and our communities to do the job it has cost me four times this week to fill up my tank. Each and every time I go, I see a \$1.359 or \$1.279 or \$1.254, whatever the number is. This government is so greedy that not only is it taking a gas tax portion, it's now taking an extra 8% that it wasn't less than a year ago.

Real estate commissions, massage therapy services, vitamins, green fees for golf—all have seen an 8% increase as a result of this government's greedy, greedy initiatives to take more from the people who are working to pay their bills. Ballet, karate, trampoline, hockey, soccer lessons etc.—everything has seen an increase. Hockey rink and hall rentals have all gone up. Tickets for live theatre with less than 3,200 seats—that's impacting some of our smaller community theatres. Fitness trainers, hairstylists, barbers—and one other that has seen an 8% increase as a result of this greedy HST tax grab that Mr. Duncan, the finance minister, has brought in, is legal fees. And nicotine replacement products, hunting and fishing licences.

The reality is that things have gotten a lot more expensive since Premier McGuinty has taken office, and this government has decided that it would like to see 8% on 17% more of the items that we purchase. Nothing has gone down in Ontario as they've promised. In fact, things continue to increase. The two biggest ticket items I might add are heat/hydro and, of course, gasoline for our cars.

If bringing in this \$3-billion greedy HST tax grab on July 1, 2010, wasn't bad enough, on that very same day this Liberal government snuck through a very, very sneaky eco tax grab that Ontario families are forced to pay on 9,000 different household items. There are, as I said, 9,320 items that the McGuinty Liberals slapped eco taxes on. There were protests in the streets across Ontario, particularly in the city that I represent, the city of Ottawa, starting at the Premier's office itself. Hundreds of people showed up to protest Mr. McGuinty. In fact, I see the member from Ottawa West—Nepean is here. Hundreds showed up to protest him as well because they did not appreciate the secrecy with which this tax was brought in.

My colleagues and I are going to read every single item into the record through the course of this debate to remind Ontario families that the McGuinty Liberals are hard-wired to tax. I'll start by reading the items. This is the entire list; it could fill seven hours, I'm sure, of debate quite easily.

But just to give you an example: a handle of a hammer sledge that's 16 inches, a handle of a hammer sledge that's 36 inches, laser auto level with wall mount system, laser auto level, measuring units, sharpening kits, staple guns, staple gun kits, cutting pipe monarchs for oil, torch kits, butane, plumbers' torch kits, trigger torch kits, quick-fire oxygen cylinders, fuel cell refills, power cutters, tube cutters, digital inspection cameras, air tube lubricants, air compressor lubricants, air compressor oil,

drill kits, combination kits for tools—there’s literally 9,000 here—rotary tools, screwdriver kits. These are everyday items. Soap is included, caulking, coating, adhesive, epoxy adhesive, laser cordless mouse, camcorders, mice for your computers, optical corded mice, cordless phones: These are literally the items that are covered by this greedy government. Even DVDs are covered by this, you’d be shocked to notice.

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Bluetooth headsets: The minute they told us we shouldn’t be talking on our phones in cars, they decided to add an extra tax to Bluetooth headsets. Phones for desks, clock radios, AM-FM radios, LCD TVs, solar lights, solar fixtures, multi-digital meters, tester kits, electrical tools, circuits, cement solvents, lamps, air conditioners, bathroom cleaners, scrub-free soaps—you name it. There have been a whole host of items that this government has added to the list for those who have to pay an additional tax. This government loves to tax so much, it finds innovative and creative ways: not only how to tax but also what to tax.

What’s extremely disappointing is that each and every day, we hear from Ontario families who are struggling. As I mentioned, on Friday the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus went to 60 different communities to talk to local community members as well as local members of the media about the various tax grabs this government has brought in place.

In fact, what he has brought in pales in comparison, we believe, to what he will bring in. As you well know, this is a government that has contemplated raising the HST. They opposed the federal government when they lowered the GST. It’s also a government that has mused, openly and very publicly, about bringing in a carbon tax. Of course, the parliamentary assistant is going to suggest that that’s not going to happen, but they did it before and they will do it again. They have promised several times in the past that they would not raise taxes. They ran ads to say that they would not add taxes or increase taxes, and what did they do? Promise made, promise broken. In 2007: promise made, promise broken.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I hear the transportation minister over there at this point in time, very upset at her government’s record. I can tell you, there is change occurring right across Ontario. We’ve seen it in the city of Toronto, but we’ve also seen it in her own riding of Don Valley West, where John Carmichael was elected, because Ontarians know and Canadians know that the best way forward is through a Conservative tax relief plan that, in the last federal election, Prime Minister Harper had introduced and what we’re going to bring forward in Ontario, through a Progressive Conservative tax relief plan, under our leader Tim Hudak.

But don’t just take it from me. I do have some quotes here that I’d like to read into the record. For example, Dan Nall from Brampton writes: “Please do whatever you can to stop this Liberal government from getting re-elected before we are taxed to death.”

Dan Nall is not the only person who has written to our caucus members and our leader to speak this way, because of course, as you know, enough is enough. People are tired of this tax, spend and wasteful government that has been re-elected based on the promise of not raising taxes. For example, Bruce Broderick wrote in a Guelph newspaper, “Complacent taxpayers are and will be paying more and more in taxes unless they take a proactive interest in the waste involved in Ontario government policies. I am a disgusted taxpayer.”

I think Bruce Broderick’s point echoes throughout Ontario, in our various communities, because people are constantly telling us that they’re paying more and getting less. That’s a common theme with this government.

E.J. Cober from North Lancaster agrees, and he writes, “As soon as Dalton McGuinty was elected Premier of Ontario, he broke all promises with stupid excuses.” Speaker, those are E.J.’s words, not mine, but they are certainly shared by the people across Ontario who believe this government is on its last legs, because you cannot continue to tell people you’re doing one thing and consistently, consistently do another and breach their trust.

Jim Murphy from Oakville—my colleague from Oakville may want to hear this—says, “What really concerns us is the continual upward creep of taxes, whether directly or through user fees and hidden taxation.”

It doesn’t end there. Here’s an entire other list of things that cost more for Ontario families thanks to Premier McGuinty: the Toronto land transfer tax; the Toronto vehicle registration fees—and of course we’re thankful that Mayor Rob Ford will give Toronto families some relief by getting rid of those, because everyone in this caucus understands that Rob Ford was able to get rid of the gravy train that most of the Ontario Liberal Party is still riding on. The hidden hydro tax is a new tax that Mr. McGuinty has brought in. Higher personal income tax; higher personal corporate tax; higher small business income tax rates; business capital tax; seniors’ property rates; eye exams. This is another big one: Chiropractic services have been delisted, and they’re more expensive for Ontario families to pay. Physiotherapy services have increased. Tire taxes, even though Mr. McGuinty once said, for example, he was opposed to them; BlackBerry’s; iPods; Blu-ray DVD players; LCD TVs—all of those have seen an increase under Dalton McGuinty.

When people talk about our young people not getting out to vote, these are some real reasons why the next generation of voters should be concerned: because he’s taxing them before they even start to make incomes. Many of these kids saving their weekly allowance to purchase these items are seeing them taxed beyond belief.

Commercial vehicle operators’ registration has gone up. Civil court fees have gone up. Small Claims Court fees have gone up. Family Court fees have gone up. Add that to the fact that HST is now on legal fees and it is now becoming a very big issue for those who want proper legal representation, when you see these very real costs increase in the court system.

Fractional ownership of cottages—basically, pay twice; tobacco; beer; wine; spirits; destination marketing fees; camping unit fees. For those people who are planning to go and enjoy themselves on this May 24 weekend—a traditional beginning-of-the-summer camping trip—I will say it again: camping unit fees; destination marketing fees; beer; wine and spirits. The reality is, all of this has gone up, making this year's family vacation more unaffordable than ever before, particularly when you add in the increase in the price of gas and the take the government is making off of the HST. It is becoming harder to have a family vacation in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Also what has gone up are college and university student centre fees, college and university athletic facility fees, and college and university extended health plan fees. We didn't get the students enough. Mr. McGuinty also has increased the desktop computer fees, laptop fees, rear projection TVs and plasma TVs, CRT TVs—I don't even know what those are, but he has increased those as well.

Computer mice fees; computer keyboard fees; computer disk drive fees; computer personal monitor fees; personal hand-held computer fees; personal digital assistant, non-cell-enabled, fees—fax machine fees have gone up.

It seems like every single aspect of our life in Ontario is now being taxed by Premier McGuinty, and people have had enough. They're asking us, "Can we get to the vote any sooner so that we can throw this guy out?" And while I'm here to say I wish that were true, we cannot do that. We do have an election on October 6, when my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa and my colleague from Halton are going to not only be re-elected but they will be part of a Tim Hudak majority government, and we're going to get to the issue here of finding relief, broad-based relief for the people who pay the bills in this province.

If it weren't bad enough that I left it at fax machine fees, we are now paying computer flatbed scanner fees; typewriter fees; copier fees; scanner fees; pager fees; microphone fees; joystick fees; game pad fees; telephone fees; answering machine fees; digital camera fees; tape camera fees; disc camera fees; film camera fees.

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It doesn't end there: audiovisual equipment fees; modem fees; amplifier fees; tape audio player fees; disk audio player fees; digital audio player fees; tape audio recorder fees; disk audio recorder fees; digital audio recorder fees and equalizer fees; preamplifier fees; speaker fees; tuner fees and turntable fees. If you enjoy music in this province, Dalton McGuinty has found a way to tax you and take more of your hard-earned money while he is at it.

This is a Premier who has found a way to not only tax digital projector fees but also tape recorder fees, video recorder fees, disk recorder fees, digital recorder fees, desktop printer fees, desktop label printer fees, desktop barcode printer fees, desktop card printer fees, portable

PC-free photo printer fees, desktop fax machine fees, camera dock printer fees, desktop multi-function machine fees, floor-standing printer fees, point-of-sale receipt printer fees and handheld printer fees.

If there has ever been somebody who has opposed technology by putting so many taxes and fees on them, it's this government here. Premier McGuinty has found a way to make money off the people who pay the bills, who want to embrace technology, but he needs his cut.

You know what Dalton McGuinty has said after each one of these fees and taxes? I think he said, "Ka-ching." I'm surprised he hasn't put a fee on the cash register. Maybe they're obsolete now—I don't know—and Dalton McGuinty doesn't find a need to tax them and put a fee on them.

But I have to say, given his record as we started out here—I believe that his favourite quote is, "[A] very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past." If you go through not only the eco tax, you go through the HST, and you go through not only the health premium or the health tax but through that other list of 40 or so other taxes and fees he has brought in, the question then becomes, "What is Mr. McGuinty's predictor of the future, given what has happened in the past?"

That's why, on Friday, members of the Ontario PC caucus joined our leader, Tim Hudak, to travel this province to inform Ontario families that, given Dalton McGuinty's past and his behaviour in the past, the best indication of what our future will be like is more taxes.

That's why, last week, we put forward—and I sponsored the motion—a motion calling on this Premier and his finance minister and all those Liberals across the way to reject future tax increases, but they stood in their place and, one by one, every single Liberal stood up and rejected the idea to reject tax increases.

The question I want to know is: Why? Why did they reject our motion calling for no new taxes or no increases in existing taxes? Why, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you why. I believe that they're trying to keep their options open to yet increase the HST by one or two points or bring in a carbon tax, as senior members of that government have previously been in support of. After they defeated our motion, the finance minister said on Wednesday that a Dalton McGuinty government would not raise or lower taxes. It's as if we've had déjà vu all over again.

I want to use Mr. McGuinty's quote that he said before he was elected: "[A] very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past." So if they've twice before told us that they weren't going to raise taxes and then, after they were elected, they turned around and they did raise taxes, why should we believe them now, that they're not going to raise taxes? We simply can't. Not only do the people in this chamber not believe them; the public doesn't believe them. Taxpayers, the voters in this province, the Ontario families who are paying the bills, don't believe Mr. Duncan, nor do they believe Premier McGuinty, that they will not raise or increase or bring in new taxes. That ship has sailed.

Déjà vu: Yes, we've seen it, because it's exactly what Mr. McGuinty said in 2003. And now we see this motion

before us, and it doesn't really mean anything because, again, they're not going to follow it.

They broke taxpayer protection laws in this province. They've broken their word to taxpayers. Why should we believe them now? Why should we believe any of the rhetoric in this motion when we know they have lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario? We know, for example, that they've brought our economy from first to worst in economic growth. Our economic growth at one point—it may still be—was lower than the province of Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province.

For the first time since Confederation, Premier McGuinty and his Liberal Party have taken Ontario into the welfare system of Canada. We actually have to accept handout payments from our federal government for the first time in Canadian history.

It took every Premier before Mr. McGuinty to amass a debt of \$148 billion, and within seven and a half short years, do you know what Dalton McGuinty did? He doubled it. Every Premier before him could only amass a certain amount, but this guy knows how to tax, he knows how to spend, he knows how to waste money, because we are now in our third consecutive deficit in Ontario. It's the largest in Ontario's history. It started at \$28 billion, and it is now around \$18 billion. It's basically going nowhere fast. We are rivalling California and Greece in terms of our economic situation. And they're now promising that they're not going to raise our taxes. I don't think anyone believes them.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It means they're going up if they promise not to raise them.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It means they're going up, as my colleague from Halton is saying.

So we now have this motion. Instead of "government motion 74," government motion 74 should be renamed the "Liberals say they won't raise taxes, and they really, really, really, really mean it this time" motion. They really mean it this time. But nobody in town believes that they really mean anything anymore.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They've got to promise not to break their promises.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As my colleague from Halton says, they're promising not to break their promises this time.

But this latest promise by Premier McGuinty not to raise taxes, at the same time that he is more likely than ever to break his word—as I've already said, he is not going to run again after the next election. Then again, maybe this is why the finance minister moved the motion, because he'll be the next Liberal leader to break his word about raising taxes.

Aside from knowing that they're going to raise taxes—it's what they do—they have added an incentive this time. Dalton McGuinty, as I said, has led Ontario to an \$18-billion deficit. He has not tried in the last seven years to reduce or stop runaway spending. As I said earlier, Rob Ford came in with stopping the gravy train. These guys are still on it. So they're a couple of stops

past the stop sign that Rob Ford has put up. But thankfully, I believe that in October the voters of Ontario will send this gravy train out of business.

But you can say one thing for them. After that long list of eco fees, after that long list of taxes, hidden hydro fees and other fees that they brought in, there's one thing this Liberal government is: They are consistent. They are consistent at raising taxes, they are consistent at saying one thing and doing another, and they are consistent in trying to use the same strategy time and time again.

They've grown the debt. They're on track to double it. Our leader, Tim Hudak, likes to point out that it took 23 Premiers 136 years to accumulate, as my colleague from Halton said, Ontario's first \$148 billion of debt. These guys have learned in a very short time how to double that. The only way to pay for it, Speaker, is to raise your taxes, those of the families of these wonderful young pages in front of you, and those of the people who visit this chamber or, quite frankly, who send us here to debate on their behalf. They will have single-handedly doubled the debt in eight years in office.

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And now, before the 2011 election, the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty are making promises again, promises they either intend not to keep or promises they can't keep. They are making these promises again—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If you want to talk about killing jobs, you should look at your own record. You've killed 300,000 manufacturing jobs. The record is there. You've done it to the people of this province, and they will never forgive you.

Let me read that quote again from Dalton McGuinty on April 4, 2011, from Hansard. I'll do a refresher for my colleague opposite. "A very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past." That is why Ontario families don't want any more pledges or promises this time. They don't want them because they simply do not believe the Premier can keep his promises.

They want a guarantee, and when it comes to taxes there is only one guarantee Dalton McGuinty will give them: He will raise their taxes. He can't help it. It's what he always does.

An Ontario Progressive Conservative government will take a different approach. We will not raise people's taxes. An Ontario PC government will lower taxes across the board to finally give Ontario families the respect they deserve and the relief that they need.

The reality is, the front bench across the way—what they have not put into the debate today is the fact that when they raise people's taxes, that money is not exactly going to the best public services. In fact, what we're seeing is secret sweetheart deals at Samsung, \$7 billion—which is a larger contract, by the way, than the F-35s that the federal Department of National Defence is purchasing for Canadian soldiers overseas. A larger sole-source contract is the Samsung agreement.

We also have the \$1-billion eHealth—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second, please. Members, we are going to be here for a long time; let's have it be a good time. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm having a great time, Speaker.

The reality is, this is the government who wants to talk about nurses and doctors, yet decided to take \$1 billion and put it in the shredder at eHealth.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I hear the Minister of Health over there. She should be ashamed for what occurred under her government's watch. Precious health care dollars intended for those who require MRIs, who need cancer care, who deal with obstetrics—that money went down the tubes. It went through a shredder. That money is no more. That's \$1 billion—after telling Ontario families that they had to pay this \$3-billion health tax.

This is unacceptable. This is a government that has lost its way, or maybe they never even found their way to begin with. The reality is, they have taken money, they have wasted it, they have asked for more. They've looked at grandmothers, soccer moms, small business owners as a personal ATM of this government. People are now rejecting them, and they're telling us that time and time and time again.

They will never be forgiven for that \$1 billion of waste at eHealth. They will never be forgiven, for example, for that \$7-billion Samsung secret deal to a foreign multinational corporation which has increased people's hydro rates across this province. They won't be forgiven for things like purchasing cars and vacations with children's aid society money. They won't be forgiven for the \$500 million to \$1 billion in lost revenue each and every year as a result of their lax approach to contraband tobacco. And they won't be forgiven for promising, time and time again, not to raise people's taxes at election time and then turning around and increasing their taxes, their fees and other mechanisms by which the government raises money.

They're simply not believed anymore. As I stated earlier in this speech, my colleagues and I had an opportunity, through the blue blitz last Friday, to travel to 60 different communities across Ontario to hear from people who were tired of paying these exorbitant rates, fees and taxes only to get little or nothing from them.

I think of Jack Garner from Barrie, who says, "The biggest insult of all to we citizens has to be the additional 8% tax increase the provincial government is going to add on the debt retirement payments we now pay because of the former Ontario Hydro's \$38-billion debt. This is tax on tax on tax.... Oh, boy!"

That tax, that debt retirement charge should have been paid off; \$7.8 billion should have been paid off this year. This government has still the exact same amount of tax on those hydro bills—a tax on a tax on a tax. If they were so concerned about the price of hydro, they wouldn't have put the HST on the price of hydro, and they wouldn't have put the HST on the price of the stranded debt, that \$7.8 billion.

But this government speaks with one voice but clearly does another thing, and that's dishonest. But that is what they have done time and time and time again: They've said one thing, and they have done another.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to withdraw that last comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I just wish that they would tell the truth, but they are so opposed to the truth that it becomes difficult.

Doug Priest from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock says, "This province will be crippled if this unprecedented tax grab, cleverly disguised as the harmonized sales tax, comes into effect. It will mostly hurt retired people and people on ... fixed incomes."

Speaker, I know you. I know that in your community, you've heard the same concerns that I have heard from people telling you that their bills are becoming too high, that their income is not moving up. That has been creating a disparity with their pocketbooks.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is, if you wanted to be responsible, you would start standing up for your constituents, but not one person over there is ready to do that. They only want to toe the party line to the detriment of the people that they represent here in this chamber who have sent them here with a solemn vow that they made in the last election not to raise their taxes. They turned their backs on their constituents, and instead they did just that. That's reality.

Listen to John Pucci, who works with Hockey North-western Ontario: "The minor hockey numbers in north-western Ontario have declined for the last 10 seasons, due to the economy. And I think (the HST) is going to further complicate our recruitment of players in the minor hockey sector."

There's almost nothing more Canadian than playing hockey, and this government is trying to make it less affordable for families out there who are right now trying to make ends meet. Now this government has decided it will add an extra 8% to all things hockey.

Peter Coleman at the National Citizens Coalition said, "We ... believe this is a huge tax grab on consumers at a time when people are struggling to keep their jobs and have very little left over from their paycheque."

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the member who wants to heckle me and try to shut me down: When I was in his community over the weekend, we heard even from the journalists how tired they are of this McGuinty Liberal government. If I were any of them, I would actually go out into their communities to start talking to the people who have sent them here and actually to respect the people who have sent them here, because the people who have sent them here are telling the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, "Enough is enough. We cannot afford them anymore. We are paying more. We are getting less. We don't believe them anymore." A simple trip to the grocery store, to Walmart or to a soccer field

would do the trick for some of these members who have spent too much time in the bubble at Queen's Park and not enough time on Main Street.

Paul Bailey, president of the Police Pensioners Association of Ontario, says, "From a police perspective ... this is nothing but legalized theft."

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let's read that one again for the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. Paul Bailey, president of the Police Pensioners Association of Ontario, said, "From a police perspective ... this is nothing but legalized theft."

"Nothing but legalized theft": That is how respected members of our community like the Police Pensioners Association of Ontario view their government. That's how they describe Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government: as legalizing theft. I'd say that's quite shocking.

1600

We have this motion before us that promises for the third time, after raising taxes about 85 times, that they're not going to raise taxes, and we're supposed to believe them. Many people now just roll their eyes at this Liberal government. They don't believe them. They don't believe for a second that this government wouldn't raise taxes if it were re-elected.

I repeat, for all the banter they have—"You're going to cut nurses; you're going to cut doctors"—no one believes them. They believe that they've wasted a billion dollars on eHealth, they believe that they've wasted \$7 billion with Samsung and they believe that they've wasted \$500 million to \$1 billion with their lax attitude toward contraband tobacco. They just don't think they're good money managers.

And we see that the proof is in the pudding. This is a government that has lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. This is a government that has forced Ontario families to take subsidized payments from the federal government through the equalization program. This is a government that has staggered the economic growth of what used to be the economic generator in this nation—from first to worst. This is a government that has doubled the debt. This is a government that has the largest deficit in Ontario's history. This is a government that won't take responsibility for one of its actions.

Three weeks from now, we will leave this place for the final time in this Parliament. We will go into our communities. Many of us will go door-knocking. Some won't be returning.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Just go in there and tell them the truth.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is that if somebody wants to tell the truth, it should be the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He's had an opportunity for the last eight years to tell the truth, and in fact his government chose not to. They chose to do one thing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell on a point of order.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I've been here 16 years now, and I've found out that we are able to lie in this room, we are able to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member—he knows that is not a point of order. Would he please be seated?

I would ask the member from Nepean–Carleton to please withdraw her comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm sorry, Speaker. I was only repeating what he said. I do apologize. On the same point of order, he could also withdraw his comment.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's unparliamentary, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. Minister of Infrastructure, member from Nepean–Carleton, I can stand and we can be here until 2 o'clock in the morning—lots of fun.

Could the member from Nepean–Carleton withdraw the comment? I need to hear a clear withdrawal.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

Again, the question then becomes, "Why should anyone believe what this government has said over the past eight years, given the promises they made and their refusal to keep them?"

I remember first coming to this chamber a little more than five years ago to address, in my maiden speech, some of the challenges our province has faced as a result of this government. At the time, even thinking about the parents of autistic kids who were being taken to court by this government, which had promised at the time that it would make life easier for those children and clearly didn't—in fact, I remember they took them to court. The reality is that this is what this government does. They said anything they wanted to get elected, and then they turned their back on those same families.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm getting a rise out of them, but the reality is that the truth hurts. This is what you've done to the province. This is who you are. This is what you've done.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: You're a loser, Lisa.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It didn't take long. Order, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think I was just called a loser by the member from Oakville. Listen to this. This is the level of the debate that this Liberal government has dragged us into. They can't face the facts. They have decided that they are going to debase anyone in this institution who decides to speak against them and speak the truth.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is that I'm telling him I've been to Oakville, and the folks in Oakville have told me several times. In fact, we had one of our largest nominations in the entire province in the city of Oakville, where Terence Young, our former MPP who is now an MP, won. It was amazing that night: over 800 people

there. In Carleton–Mississippi Mills we had 800 people as well. People are fighting for Progressive Conservative nominations in this province because they want change, and the vehicle for change in Ontario today is through Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, because people know that we need broad-based tax relief. We need changes in Ontario. We need to ensure that the people of this province send people to Queen's Park based on a solemn promise and that they deliver back to their communities and they don't turn their backs—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'm able to speak above them because I can tell you something: I speak with the people of Ontario behind the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. I have to tell you something: They believe us. They do not believe them. Time and time and time again, this government has let them down, whether that's on taxes, whether that's on scandals, whether that is their treatment of autistic children, which is one thing that became a passion of mine, given the failures of this current McGuinty Liberal government.

We will continue to debate this resolution for as long as we're able to do this before the government invokes further closure on debate on any other matter. I must say that every member of the Progressive Conservative caucus is committed to speaking to this motion because we firmly believe that this government, if elected, will raise taxes.

As I said, my colleague and I participated in something called the blue blitz on Friday. We had a wonderful time. Where were you—in Guelph?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was actually initially in Chatham, and then I went to Wallaceburg. After that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would remind the member from Nepean–Carleton to speak to the Chair, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He was in Chatham and Wallaceburg—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Then after that, St. Thomas and Aylmer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —and then after that, St. Thomas and Aylmer. So he had a four-city tour, as did I, on Friday. It was amazing, just the level of energy and the commitment by the Progressive Conservative candidates, the support that they're receiving from the people of the province.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Sixty communities.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is, 60 communities now have said that they want change, and that feels pretty good for the people who now, for eight long years, have suffered under this tax-and-waste government.

We have recruited some really great candidates, who were able to come out and share our message of tax relief.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Monte McNaughton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Monte McNaughton, for example, in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. We have Rocco

Rossi from Eglinton–Lawrence. I think a few of the Liberals over there may know who he is. Kevin Gaudet, a former federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, actually remembers the pledge, that solemn pledge I was telling you about earlier today that Dalton McGuinty himself had signed. He said he would not raise taxes, and then he turned around and he did it. He is one of our candidates. He's a great candidate. He's going to stand up for Ontario families. He's going to join people like Pam Hundal, in Brampton, and Sanjeev Maingi, also in Brampton. In that community, they are so strong. They're working hard. We've been out talking about hydro rate increases. We've been out talking about the local health integration networks, which, by the way, Tim Hudak has committed to scrapping and putting that whole \$250 million into front-line health care.

I can tell you something: The wonderful thing is, the money is going to go to where it's intended to go on October 7, when Tim Hudak is Premier, and we've got the team behind him to do just that. We've got people like the member from Whitby–Oshawa, a very strong advocate for children with mental health issues. We also have our member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who was, I think, one of Ontario's best education ministers, and she'll continue to be a strong voice in a Progressive Conservative government when we form the government.

We have the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, near my riding, a very strong voice and a very vocal voice, as is the member for Oxford, for the agricultural community and the rural communities in our province. In fact, that's why one of our key platform commitments to rural communities is something that's very important, that was mentioned with Jim McDonnell, our candidate in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, on the weekend, which is restoring that gas tax money to its rightful place, to every community in Ontario, not just to big cities, like this government does. All those rural municipalities right now in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Leeds–Grenville, where my colleague Steve Clark is from—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Wellington–Halton Hills.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Wellington–Halton Hills—they're all going to now have their fair share, which this government, sadly, took away. Even with the tax dollars that we are sending there, this government has found an inequitable way of distributing that money.

I must say, Speaker, that I am proud to stand up on behalf of Ontario families who have sent me here. As you know, I had an opportunity, throughout the past year and a bit, as revenue critic for the Ontario PC caucus, to travel the province and to speak to stakeholder groups. We've spoken to everyone from hairstylists, to people who do shoe-shining, to people who offer health care services through home care, to others who do snow removal. They all tell me one thing: They just simply can't afford this government anymore.

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We heard from lawyers who told us that they were going to have raise their rates and it was going to become more unaffordable, as I spoke to earlier in this session.

We talked to people who are helping families with their mutual funds, those MERs—mutual fund expense ratios—that were going to see an increase as well.

Quite honestly, this group across the way needs to have a frank discussion with itself to see if there's any way that they could actually do what we're talking about, which is broad-based tax relief for people in this province. But they have not. They have found creative ways to bring in taxes.

Let me give you another example. When we talked about the eco fees, these 9,300 different household items that were being hit by the eco tax on same day that the HST was brought in—you will remember that. That was the day that we started to see even household cleaners see a new tax, and—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Grass seed.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Grass seed in the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills went up, and these protests occurred right across Ontario. It was quite remarkable, because people had had enough already. It was really the moment—

Mr. Ted Arnott: I felt sorry for Gerretsen at that press conference.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, exactly. My colleague from Halton Hills said that he felt sorry for the previous Minister of the Environment, Mr. Gerretsen, at that press conference, as did I. I thought it was too bad he'd been sold up the river. But the reality is, it wasn't just a tax grab; it was a sneaky tax grab. It was brought in through the back door; it wasn't even brought in through this chamber. They increased taxes without bringing it to the Ontario Legislature. I've never heard of that being done before, but Mr. McGuinty was so crafty in how he had done it that he figured out a way to raise taxes behind the backs of the Ontario public.

But listen, they won't forget it; I can tell you that. I remember those protests. They happened here in Toronto; I believe they happened in London. They happened right across the province—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Spontaneous.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And they were spontaneous. They were people who had just had enough already, and there was just one more needle in that haystack. The reality is, it was the straw that broke the camel's back—that's the analogy I was trying to make there, Speaker, but it's so hard when you're being shouted down by the ministers of the crown.

The reality is, we're going to continue to press for tax fairness. We will press on October 6, moving forward for tax relief within our own government. And we're looking forward, I might add, to the next couple of weeks when this chamber rises, for us to actually be in the communities with the people we do represent, to share with them our plan forward that Tim Hudak will be releasing to the public.

We already know some of the key issues we're going to offer. One is to make sure that hydro prices are affordable for Ontario families. This government has taken prices and they've skewed them so badly toward

the unaffordable that it is quite sad. I believe that has now become the number one issue that my constituents call us about, how unaffordable that is.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: How are you going to keep the lights on?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And I understand: You should pay your bill and keep the lights on. That's a very important thing, Minister. But do you know what the problem is?

Interjection.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, capacity is one thing; affordability is another. I think the reality is that this is a government that doesn't understand how to ensure that there is a consumer ability to pay.

I think that this is a government that's pretty out of touch as well. I feel sorry for them. But the reality is, they're going to continue to talk their talk, they're going to continue to insult their opponents, and they are going to continue to shout us down. But there will be one decision on October 6 that I believe people will make, and it will be for tax fairness.

The problem that my colleagues across the way have is that they continue to promise no new taxes, and then they turn their back on the voter and they implement them. When I look at this motion, government motion 74, this is a government that says that they reject increases or decreases to taxes. This is a government that has never met a tax hike it didn't like. Even if it makes no sense to tax it, they tax it—like the seed, calling it an environmental hazard, apparently. It just goes with some of the bizarre policies.

In fact, last week, I remember standing in this chamber about contraband tobacco, and the Liberal member from Ottawa–Orléans said that Conservatives have never been on the side of children—never. And do you know what was interesting? On Friday, I was in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell with our candidate, talking about taxes, and I got an email from Councillor Bob Monette, who called on the member from Ottawa–Orléans either to apologize to his constituents or to resign. He chose not to. He chose not to apologize, so the councillor there had called on him to resign. And that's a very interesting dynamic in that community, when those things start to occur.

But we're going to continue to press for tax relief. We're going to continue to speak for Ontario families. We're going to continue to hold this government to account for their reckless tax hikes, their reckless mismanagement of tax dollars once they're in their hands, and we're going to continue to ask them the tough questions until we're fortunate to form government and follow the plan we have promised to follow. It's a novel idea: "Promise made, promise kept." I believe the last time that happened in this province was when a man named Mike Harris was Premier, who made promises and he kept them. I can tell you something: He did everything he said he would do.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He did everything he said he would do. This government did everything it said it wouldn't. That is quite a legacy: "Everything we said we wouldn't, we did. Every promise we made, we broke."

Interjections.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Can you believe that, Speaker? Even their own members are sitting over there, shaking their heads.

I can tell you something: I am shocked and appalled by the behaviour of some of the members over there in not representing their constituents on the floor of the House when I know they are getting the same calls that we are, when I know that they are getting the same emails—if I even go through this list of folks; let me just go through here.

For example, John Pucci from Hockey Northwestern Ontario, who is from, I believe, Thunder Bay—I think I met with him as he met with Tim Hudak. He's opposed to the HST.

I believe we have another quote here—I've got so many pieces of paper here, Speaker, but I believe I had one here from Barrie. That's a Liberal riding. We had one from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. That's a Liberal member-held riding. We're getting emails and phone calls from Liberal constituents saying, "Please stand up to these tax hikes." "Please stand up to this Liberal government because they don't stand up for me," and we're going to continue to do that. There's no doubt about it.

My colleague the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who is our finance critic, has been very vocal in opposing this government's reckless tax hikes. He continues to be astonished—I know this from having spoken with him—at the level of taxation that they've brought in to make life unaffordable. He has been a steadfast advocate—and he'll be joining the debate soon—on tax relief for the Ontario family. We're looking forward to bringing forward, when the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka is a minister, broad-based tax relief.

I've already spoken about you, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and the great work you're doing as a rural advocate, making sure that all of those gas tax monies are applied fairly and evenly right across Ontario. You've done a tremendous job on that.

So, all this is to say, in the last 39 seconds I have after this hour-long debate, that we're going to continue to press ahead for broad-based tax relief for Ontario families. We're going to stand up here, we will exhaust this debate, and we will never let the people down who have sent us here. We only wish the same would occur on that side of the aisle, where those folks over there on the red team would stand up and stand with their constituents, because they have two weeks left of this Legislature. They can do the right thing. They could have, last week, endorsed our resolution for no new taxes, but they chose not to.

I'm looking forward to—thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We have certainly reached the silly season in this place, I must say. We can tell that by the level of debate in this place and also the motion, and that's what I would like to speak to.

"Why in God's name would the government want to come with such a motion two weeks before the end of this House session prior to a provincial election?", you've really got to ask yourself. It's like going up and trying to remind people of all the promises that you broke prior to the last election, by the actions that they took since being elected, and then saying, "Trust me. I've got this motion in the House that basically makes it okay that I broke all of these promises."

It seems to me kind of a silly thing to do. At a time when the government says it's got important business to move forward, at a time when the government should be debating issues that really matter to the people across this province, around joblessness, around the state of health care, around the state of education and other issues, this government brings in what is essentially a political motion.

God, I would love nothing better than to have a political debate, but let's have that in a provincial election. Let's not have it in this place. This particular motion is nothing more than the Liberal Party—and I'm not even saying "the government," but the Liberal Party—trying to put some distance between themselves and their actions.

1620

I say to the government: Be careful what you ask for, because you will get the kind of speeches that you just got from the members of the opposition, the Conservative Party, who are going to come at you every which way they can because you're opening up and giving us the opportunity to do so. I say to the government across the way: The way that you stand up for your record is to run in the next election, and then the people of the province will decide yea or nay on your agenda and how you have done vis-à-vis the promises you made in previous elections and how you governed the province in the last four years. To come into this House and to bring this particular motion forward I think is not very smart politics at all on the part of the Liberal Party. I'm wondering if the people running the campaign for the Liberal Party of Ontario are the same people who ran Mr. Ignatieff's campaign federally, because it certainly seems to me that it's the same kind of strategy, and it's a strategy that, quite frankly, didn't work in the last federal election; I don't expect it's going to work very much in this election.

Let me get to the motion. It reads as follows—first of all the title: "Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth." Why would a government have to put a motion in the House two weeks before the House rises about an Ontario tax plan for job growth? I think the title says every-

thing. On job growth, there have been lots of jobs shed in this economy of Ontario over the last number of years, and, yes, some of it is very much related to the recession; nobody is going to argue otherwise. But this government's response to the recession has been absolutely abysmal, and so they feel a need to talk to the issue of joblessness by saying, "Look at this. We have a tax plan for job growth." Tell that to workers in southwestern Ontario and southeastern Ontario, in northern Ontario and in Toronto, who, quite frankly, have lost their jobs in this recession and have been waiting for a provincial or federal government to do something that could make their lives easier and give them some hope so that they and their families know that, at the end of the tunnel, there is light, and when they do reach that light, there will be a job and enough money to give them the standard of living that they want for themselves and their kids. "No," the government says. "We have to have this motion, motion number 74, Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth." I'll go back to the job growth thing in a second, but the very fact they say "job growth" tells you they're feeling spectacularly sensitive in that area.

Then they talk about the Ontario tax plan inside the title of the motion. Tax plan? I hope this government runs on the HST in the upcoming provincial election, because I can tell you, if they are not, we will, and I know the Conservatives will, because the HST is about as hated a tax as the GST under Brian Mulroney. Do you remember what happened to Brian Mulroney? He brought in the GST and he was relegated to two seats. A governing party of Canada that had been long established in this country, introduced the GST at the federal level, and then what did they do? They did that, and the voters of Canada in the next election threw them all out except for two seats: Elsie Wayne from eastern Canada and Mr. Jean Charest, who's now the leader of the Liberal Party and the Premier of Quebec. They were the only two to come back. Please, run on the HST; I want you to. I want you to run around the province during the leaders' tour when the plane and the bus of the Premier go from town to town in northern Ontario, and I hope he comes to Timmins, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Moosonee and Attawapiskat and he talks to people about the HST, because I can tell you, it is going to be a winning combination for moi and anybody running in opposition to this government, because people are mad at the HST, and rightfully so. At a time when people were losing their jobs by the hundreds of thousands, when people lost income and had a hard time trying to make ends meet, this government says, "I'm going to go and sock you with another tax."

Yes, here we are. We have a motion on the part of the Liberal Party—and I'm not going to say "the government of Ontario," because certainly to God this hasn't come from the government; it has to come from the Liberal Party—on Ontario's tax plan for job growth. Clearly, the government is feeling sensitive to the issue of taxation in this province and their policy, and clearly they're feeling sensitive to the issue of job growth.

Let's read the motion, and it's in the name of Mr. Duncan, the illustrious Minister of Finance from one of the Windsor ridings: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that to make life easier for Ontario families"—well, there's the first part, as I was alluding to in the title: "making life easier for Ontario families," because the government is recognizing—or the Liberal Party, I should say—in this motion that life isn't easier for average families in Ontario, because if it was, they wouldn't have to say it; they'd be doing something else right now.

People in Ontario are feeling the pinch. They've lost their jobs. The workers who worked at Xstrata, the workers who worked at the Tembec mill in Smooth Rock Falls, the workers who worked in Dubreuilville, the workers who worked in plants in Windsor and all over this province who have lost their jobs have gone from making a very good salary to having almost no salary in some cases. Yes, some people have returned to work, but the majority of people have not returned to the types of jobs they had prior to this recession.

The fact that the government has to say "to make life easier for Ontario families" is a recognition that life has gotten harder—lost your job, having to make ends meet. The price of gas is going up. The price of electricity has gone up. The price of everything has gone through the roof. How do you get a good wage if you're not working? You're having to survive on minimum wage jobs or better by a couple of bucks an hour. In some cases, people are still caught in unemployment insurance or what we used to call welfare.

So people are feeling rather pinched, and I think the fact that the government has to say "to make life easier for Ontario families" speaks to how families aren't feeling that life is all that easy. Families are, quite frankly, feeling the pinch. It's not true just in my constituency; it's true across all constituencies in this province. People are not better off after seven years of a McGuinty government.

Has this government done some good things? Absolutely, they've done some good things. They've done some good things in education and a few other things that we can talk about.

But for the average issue, for the person at the doorstep, the person living at home, it's "Am I doing any better in my life today when it comes to how my family is able to enjoy the joys of life?" When you're having to struggle to pay the mortgage or the rent, and in some cases, yes, you've lost your house, when you're having to struggle to make payments on your credit card, just minimum payments of interest every month—because people have had to go to their credit cards to pay their bills because they don't have enough money. How many people like that do you know, the member from Renfrew, who come to you or who you run across in your constituency?

Today a guy at the airport was telling me he lost his job working at Xstrata. The guy is driving a cab now because that's the only real job he's been able to get. He

went from a job where he was making probably \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year—he and his wife both lost their jobs because they both worked at Xstrata, and now they're having to survive on two minimum wage jobs. They had to use their credit cards to try to keep their kids in college—because they're at that age. One of their kids is going to college in Toronto, and the other one was almost done university at the time. They had to make sure that their kids continued their education, so they basically lived off the credit card. That's how they paid it. They didn't live life; they just paid for the bills of their kids, because they want to make sure that their kids get a good start in life. Having to do that is a pretty tough thing when you're 40 or 50 years old and looking towards your own retirement. You see your debt going up because you're not able to make ends meet.

In some cases, people are losing their homes. I know plenty of families across Ontario—well, I know people in my riding, but it's the same across Ontario—where people have had to give up their houses. They've had to sell them because they can't afford to keep them, because they lost their job, they're not making the income they used to make and, as a result, are not able to keep up the family home. Their municipal taxes have gone up. The price of electricity has gone up.

The woman who lived behind my place—I'm on Middleton Avenue; she lived on Bannerman—sold her house about three years ago. When her husband died about three years ago, they went from two people on a pension to just her. She couldn't afford to keep her house; she had to sell it. She didn't want to sell the house. It was the pride and joy of this woman and her husband that they had managed to pay this house off over a number of years. They had a little bit of enjoyment there. They had a nice little garage in the back; a little garden. Life was good. But she couldn't afford to keep it. She had to sell it because, as she said, "I can't pay the monthly bills, even though the thing is paid off, with my pension that's barely \$1,000 a month." By the time she cashed out her old-age pension and the CPP that she was entitled to, I think she was at around \$1,100 or \$1,200 a month. She said, "I add up all my bills. I don't have enough money to buy groceries. I can't make peanut butter sandwiches for my grandson." That's the one story she told me. So it's really tough out there.

The fact that the government says "to make life easier for Ontario families" in this motion speaks to the fact that the Liberal Party of Ontario knows that they're vulnerable there and they're looking for some way to create—how would you say—excitement for the Liberal brand and trying to tell people they've done a whole lot.

1630

Well, I would say to the governing party, the Liberal Party of Ontario, that if you feel that way, have that debate in the election, not in the Legislature. There are other things we can be doing in this place, but nonetheless, you bring these types of motions.

It goes on to say: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that to make life easier for Ontario

families and help our economy remain strong...." Well, there's the second thing they're avowing inside this motion. They're talking about the health of the economy. The health of the economy is not strong.

Yes, Ontario and Canada have done better compared to the United States and others, and I would argue that there's a very simple reason for that: We are a natural resource economy. When it comes to mining, when it comes to oil, when it comes to natural gas, when it comes the all those natural resources that are abundant in Canada and specifically in Ontario, we are doing quite well, because people want to buy our copper, they want to buy our zinc, they want to buy our oil and gas and they want to buy our gold. They want to buy the things we produce out of natural resources. So if you look at the Toronto Stock Exchange, the real leaders driving the TSX are those types of industries that have led the way for Canada and Ontario.

The other part of it is that we have a much more regulated system of banking in Canada compared to other countries like the United States. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. Was it all created by Stephen Harper? Darned right it wasn't.

In the last election, Mr. Harper was taking credit for how the banks run in this country. As a matter of fact, our banking system was long established before most of us were even thought of. To all of a sudden take credit for how well we did in Canada as a result of regulation of the banks, I thought, was a bit much. Nonetheless, one of the reasons we weathered the storm is that in Canada over the years, we have set a fairly good system of trying to keep an eye on the banks to make sure they don't have the kind of latitude to make bad loans, as we saw in the United States. As a result, we did better in Canada.

What's the word here again? "The economy remains strong." Is the economy strong? Absolutely not. Go and take a look in Ontario. Go and look in places like Sioux Lookout, Windsor and Sarnia. Go around this province—Kingston, other than the university there. The economy is not doing what it used to before. People are struggling. People are trying to figure out if they can manage to keep their doors open, in some cases. Yes, some of them have turned the corner, because things are starting to turn around. As with all recessions, there's a beginning, a middle and an end, and we're probably in the middle of the process. We're certainly not at the beginning, and we're certainly not at the end. But in the end, a lot of people out there are struggling.

Some are making decisions about whether they even want to invest in Ontario. I can tell you that there really is a sense, because of actions by this government, that Ontario is not a good place to invest. I don't like saying that, but if you look in the forestry sector, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and others involved in the forest industry were telling this government, through Bill 151, the forest tenure act, and in other bills the government did prior to this, and the caribou habitat legislation under the Endangered Species Act and all kinds of other things—they've been saying to the government, "Listen,

you're making it tough for our people to go to our boards and ask that money be invested in Ontario in order to modernize and expand our mills. Quite frankly, it is getting very expensive to do business in Ontario."

When you go and talk to the people who have to make the decisions at places like Eacom, like Tembec, like De Beers Canada, like Goldcorp, it is getting a little bit harder for them to make the argument to invest money in Ontario. In some cases, when those companies have a choice between more than one project, one in Ontario and one, let's say, in Quebec or somewhere else in Canada, unfortunately we're losing out, because the Quebec government, for example, although not perfect, has really done some things that are interesting in order to assist the Quebec economy.

Last week, we saw the government announce their version of the northern growth plan. The Liberal government in Ontario announced the northern growth plan—I don't know—about two months ago. Most people laughed at it. "If anything at all," they said, "they've got a plan to make a plan." That's what they announced in that growth plan announcement.

We said at the time—not only myself but other people in northern Ontario—that the problem with the growth plan was that it was not only a plan to make a plan, but it didn't have anything tied to it that would give you an indication that something was going to happen out of that plan. There was no money tied to it, there were no real objectives tied to it and there were no strategies or initiatives that were going to be implemented as a result of it. So it ended up becoming a plan to make a plan, similar to what they said in the leadup to the last provincial election.

The Liberal government in Quebec went out and said, "We've got a plan." It was very similar, actually, to the Ontario plan if you look at it. I've had a chance to read it. What they did was some specific things in order to try to get that plan to do something. They have some initiatives.

For example, they went to Hydro-Québec—and I can't believe this; only in Quebec would you do this, right? They went to Hydro-Québec and said, "You have an economic responsibility"—and social, too, I would suppose—"to the people of Quebec. You're producing electricity as a result of the water that flows through our rivers across Quebec, and we want you to take some of that money and reinvest in it northern Quebec in order to help with economic development and also improve on social infrastructure." So in the northern growth plan of Quebec, Quebec Hydro is putting up \$10 million a year towards that alone.

That's only 10 million bucks. I recognize that doesn't fix all the problems of northern Quebec; it certainly would not fix all the problems in northern Ontario. But the point is that the Quebec government said, "Hey, Quebec Hydro is doing very well, thank you very much, and they owe to it to northern Quebec, where we get most of our energy from, to put some money back other than the money they put by regular means of hiring people and doing the kinds of activities they do in producing electricity."

The government of Quebec announced about \$250 million to fund initiatives to assist the northern economy of Quebec to create the jobs, because what they said in their plan is similar to what Ontario said, except they're taking some actions. They said, "It is to everybody's advantage if northern Quebec"—or in our case "northern Ontario is doing well because wealth that is created in northern Ontario is benefiting everybody in Ontario and Canada." Why? Because a lot of that capital comes from southern Ontario. A lot of the expertise that supports some of those companies up north is based here in Toronto specifically and in southern Ontario. Contractors, suppliers, consultants and such who benefit from the riches created in the north are based in southern Ontario.

So the fact that the government's got to say in a motion—and I'll read it again—"help our economy remain strong" is a real indication that the government recognizes that the economy isn't strong. The Liberal Party has put forward this particular motion to try to counter the arguments that the economy is strong.

I look at just one little thing alone. Two budgets ago the Ontario government said in the budget, "Ring of Fire." We all fell into the Ring of Fire. It's like the Johnny Cash song. I won't sing it today, thank God. I don't have a guitar with me. But it was going to be the saving grace of northern Ontario. This is the thing that was going to help all of us create jobs in northern Ontario, and it was going to help all of the Ontario economy. I couldn't agree more. I don't think you'll find a northerner, you won't find a southerner, you won't find a Canadian who doesn't believe that the Ring of Fire can create wealth in this province and in this country. But how does that happen if the government's not prepared to do what it needs to do?

Here's the first thing they've got to do: They've got to say to the Ring of Fire people, "We're serious to sit down with you and help develop the infrastructure that you're going to need to access your site." Imagine if Ford Canada said, "We're going to build a brand new auto plant 30 miles north of the 401." The province of Ontario, rightfully so, would build a freeway to get to the Ford plant. They'd bring the water and sewer in. They'd bring the hydro lines in. They would bring all of the infrastructure that plant needs to be able to run 30 miles north of the 401—and rightfully so. There's a net economic return for the government of Ontario in investing in those particular infrastructures because it will create economic activity that creates jobs, that creates wealth. That's taxation that goes back into the Ontario economy—no question. But why is it that in the Ring of Fire the government's not prepared to pick up some of the infrastructure costs of developing road or rail and hydro to go up into the Ring of Fire?

I'll tell you what's going to happen, because I've seen this picture before. De Beers Canada, which in my riding operates a diamond mine 90 miles west of Attawapiskat, built their own hydro line, not subsidized by the province of Ontario. Five Nations Energy, the First Nations,

helped to build it. They created a business to be able to go into the business of transmitting electricity. There was some involvement on the part of the government on that. But essentially, it was developed entirely with private money through De Beers. The building and the maintenance of the winter road to service the site up at De Beers—they get about the same kind of money that they got before the mine ever showed up for that winter road, which is something like 100,000 bucks a year. Can you imagine getting \$100,000 a year to maintain a road in southern Ontario that's probably about 500 kilometres long, 400 at the minimum? Give me a break. We can't even maintain a winter road for a world-class diamond project like the Victor diamond mine.

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If the government is serious about the Ring of Fire moving forward, it seems to me that we should be sitting down with those people in the mining industry who are involved—the Noronts and others; Cliffs resources, KWG—and say, “Listen, we want to sit down with you and we want to talk about how we can build infrastructure together that will service your needs as mining companies, that will serve the needs of the First Nations people in that area, and that will serve the needs of Ontario into the future,” and Ontario will become a part of building the road, the rail, whatever needs to be built in order to maintain those mines. It's not as if we're building the plant for them. All we would do is build the infrastructure to get the plant up and running. They've got to build the plant themselves. But why isn't any of that done?

For example, training: Why aren't we sitting down with those companies and saying, “We will have aggressive training programs in order to develop the manpower needed to construct and operate those mines”? There's a huge pool of unemployed people living around the Ring of Fire, communities with 90%, 95% unemployment—places like Marten Falls, Webeque, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Attawapiskat, Peawanuck. There's a whole bunch of communities, and you can draw a workforce out of those communities, but there's training that's lacking. When you've got people who are not working because of the bad economic situation in their communities, for them to be hired as mechanics, electricians, secretaries, or mine workers, whatever it might be, you need to train them. Why aren't we serious about doing those kinds of things?

The government, I think, is not serious about that whole line about how you can help our economy remain strong, because here was an opportunity announced in the budget two years ago, and the government, in two years, other than putting together the Ring of Fire coordinator, has not done anything in order to advance the cost of building that project.

And here's the last thing they should do: They should say, “In exchange for us supporting developing your infrastructure needs and doing the type of things that you need to do in order to make sure you have cheap electrical power and access to your site etc., you will do

all the refining and smelting in Ontario.” Then they would have to build a refinery/smelter here in Ontario.

Did you know that there were about 20 refinery/smelters in this province about 20 years ago? We're down now to about two, because mining companies that are now owned by companies that are no longer Canadian are moving their refining capacities into China, where the demand is. I think that is a really short-sighted move on our part. Would Ralph Klein or would the premier of Newfoundland allow the transformation of oil and gas to happen, by and large, outside of their provinces? Some of that happens, but not to a large degree. Does Norway give its natural resource of gas without getting something back? Absolutely not. Those countries understand that the natural resources are a finite resource and that you've got to maximize the benefit out of those things while they last. To allow mining companies or resource extraction companies to come in and extract the ore and not add value to it and not give economic benefit to the region from which it's being taken is absolutely ludicrous.

I would predict, if we continue down this path, that the Ring of Fire will still be something we're talking about a year or two or three down the road. And I can guarantee you, Madam Speaker, if we form government on October 7, one of the things that our government will do, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, is to make sure that we deal with those issues so that in fact we can get those types of developments to come into Ontario, that Ontario is a place that you're interested in investing in. But you can't do that in the way that this particular government is going on.

Carrying on with this particular motion—and this is only line 2; my God, I could go on here—“Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth as reaffirmed in the 2011 budget removes 90,000 Ontarians from the income tax rolls....” Well, yeah, that's true: They have set it up so that there are 90,000 people less paying taxes today. But some of those numbers are just people who are unemployed. It's pretty easy to take the number 90,000—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, but seriously. There is more unemployment in this province, and there's less people paying taxes. The government has changed the tax rules so that the threshold by which you start paying taxes is higher, which takes people off the tax rolls; I understand that. But every government has been doing that. This is not the first government to have done that. God, Bob Rae did it, Mike Harris did it, Ernie Eves did it, and, yes, Dalton McGuinty did it. We've been moving down that way for a long time. Why? Because it has long been recognized that the tax burden has shifted from corporations and those who used to pay the majority of taxes in this country to the working class. There was a time, not that long ago, when most of us were probably born, back in the 1950s, when a larger percentage of tax was collected from the activities of business than there was from individuals, and that has shifted over the years.

Over the years, there's been this move to give corporate tax cut after corporate tax cut after corporate tax

cut, and we're now down to—I think around 17% is the corporate tax rate in Ontario, somewhere around there, 17% or 18%. It used to be about 50%. I'm not arguing that we return to 50%; that's not my argument. My argument is, yes, the government has taken 90,000 people off the lowest end of the income scale, rightfully so. But what they've also done is removed corporations which are profitable from paying more tax than they did before. As a result, we've lost the revenue, which means the government had to create another tax—the HST—to make up the room.

What they've done is taken the tax off the lowest income, they've taken the tax off the highest income and they've slogged it onto the rest of us. So now we've got the HST, where we're paying full HST on things that we never used to have to pay HST on before and people are feeling it. People are hurting, people are mad, and rightfully so, for good reason.

So when the government says in this motion that "Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth as reaffirmed in the 2011 budget removes 90,000 Ontarians from the income tax rolls," darn right they did, but at a cost. Everybody in this province is now paying more taxes as a result of this government than they did prior to the government coming to office. That's the bottom line.

The government can try to spin it any way they can. The government can say, "Oh, we've taken taxes off the lowest income. We've taken the taxes off the highest income. We've done this, that and the other thing." Yes, they're real measures. I don't argue that you've done those things. But the average person in this province is certainly paying for more hydro and certainly paying more taxes than they did before, so people are feeling the pinch.

Who am I to complain? I make \$131,000 a year in this place, but my hydro bill at my cottage went from about \$200 a month to about \$650 a month in the winter because of what you guys call smart meters, but it's a differential—what do they call it again?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Time-of-use.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —time-of-use policy, and also the increased hydro rates. I'm only electric out there because there's no natural gas, so I heat with wood and I use electricity. I was paying \$250 a month. That's what I used to pay and I used to think that was a lot of money. I'm up to over \$650 a month. So how do people afford—never mind to keep a cottage—to own a home when their hydro bill has gone up, in my case, more than double?

Thank God I make a good salary and I can afford to do it, but I'm telling you, there are a lot of people who can't, and at one point I won't be able to either. I'm not going to be here forever. At one point I will retire, in about 10 years' time, and I will have to retire on whatever income I've got. Hopefully, I get to retire. I hope the people of Timmins–James Bay continue sending me back. I would never presume that I know their decision. I feel fairly good about it, but the point is, if I retire 10 years from now, I'm going to have to make some decisions—cottage or the house, house or the cottage. You can't afford to keep them both, not in this particular environment.

Anyway, I just say to this motion that again it is pretty clear that the Liberal Party has its hand in here because they're trying to inoculate the government after seven years in office to issues that are strongly felt within Ontario.

Let me give you one that I thought was really hilarious. FONOM—everybody knows what FONOM is here, right? FONOM is the northern municipal association, essentially. We all had a chance to go and speak to it last week. I represented Andrea Horwath, Mr. Hudak was there in the afternoon following me, and following him was Mr. Bartolucci. I went there and brought greetings on behalf of Andrea and talked about the need for the province to provide predictable, sustainable funding on the capital side so that municipalities are able to plan. I talked about some of the things that we, as New Democrats, believe have to happen.

Mr. Hudak came in. He gave more of a political speech, I would say, less on the substance part of it. But then we had Mr. Bartolucci show up, and he had a 40-minute speech. I thought this was quite something. His whole speech was about, "Hey, listen. People up in northern Ontario have the impression that this government has not been consulting. I want to tell you that's not the case." And that was his 40-minute speech.

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I was down in Niagara at the police association meeting, where I represented the caucus in an all-party debate there on Friday morning, so I talked to delegates who were there from my riding and a few of our candidates who are running in the upcoming provincial election who were at that as well. We had a fascinating chat about that speech. What they said was that Mr. Bartolucci spent hardly any time—actually, spent no time—on the needs of municipalities. He spent the entire time attacking New Democrats and attacking Conservatives and talking about what a great job the government had done when it came to consulting the people of Ontario.

I wish I had the article with me, because I was reading it online this morning. Somebody pointed it out to me yesterday when I was having a chat with one of our candidates. I had to go and read it online. I thought it was just something—and it's reported in the paper as a 40-minute speech attacking New Democrats and Conservatives and speaking about how great a job this government has done on consulting northern Ontario. Then the article goes on to say that nothing could be further from the truth.

This motion is in the same line. It's like Darwinism. It's like revisionism. Well, not Darwinism; that's not fair. Darwin actually would be the wrong analogy, but it's revisionist history for sure. The government, by way of this motion, is trying to say, "Everything's fine. We have the best tax rate. You're feeling a lot better. The economy is doing great," when everybody feels that it's doing completely the opposite. The government, like the speech from Mr. Bartolucci on Friday in Timmins, at FONOM, is of the same ilk.

Then you get into the harmonized sales tax. That one takes the cake. The motion says that the plan "provides

93% of Ontarians with a permanent personal income tax cut, maintains the harmonized sales tax at the current rate and provides \$12 billion in tax relief for families and \$4.8 billion in tax relief for businesses....”

Imagine this: A government introduces a tax called the HST, and they find it necessary to have temporary relief measures to offset the cost of the HST until after the election. So what they've essentially done is, they've gone into your pocket and they've taken money out of your pocket every time you buy something, whether it be a service or a good, by way of the HST. They say, “People are really going to feel this and people are really going to be mad,” so the government's response was, “Let's send them a cheque every so often. We'll send them a cheque. When they get a cheque—and hopefully they'll probably get one, oh, just about August, before the election.”

The Tories tried this. It didn't work for you guys, if you remember.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm being fair here. Remember when they tried to do the same thing? It didn't work. Most people went, “No, I don't buy it. I don't buy getting a cheque in the mail as a way of making me forget that you charged me the HST.”

Then there's the hydro one, which really takes the cake. We're in the House day after day after day talking about high electricity rates, and we, as New Democrats, say, “Take it off hydro.” So the government comes in—they don't even take it off hydro—and they give us a 10% reduction on our hydro bill until when? Until after the next provincial election. Oh, my God. Do you think people are really going to buy it? Do you think people are going to go, “Oh, I just got my hydro bill. Let me see this here. Oh, Dalton McGuinty is giving me 10%.”

Mr. John Yakabuski: What a nice guy, eh?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They don't think he's a nice guy, because they say, “If he has to give me a 10% rebate on my bill, here's the first problem: that he had to give me the 10%.” That's the first problem—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was too high in the first place.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —because that bill was too high. So it's an admission on the part of the government that the bill is too high, just as our tax bill is too high. Either they send you a cheque every six months or they take it off your hydro bill every month as a way of being able to say, “We're charging you too many taxes and we're charging you too much on hydro.” So that's the first problem.

The second—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: So why did you vote against it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, we actually voted in favour of your 10%.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: So don't criticize it, then.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I am criticizing it. It's a temporary measure. Had the electricity rate not gone up, you would have never had to give it, is my point.

Here's the second part. The second part of this is: It's all going to end after the election. Do you think that voters are going to say, “I forget there's an election on October 6. Mr. McGuinty is going to keep on sending me a cheque every six months, and Mr. McGuinty is going to keep on sending me a 10% reduction on my hydro bill every month”? No, no; people don't buy it. This is an attempt to get to the next election, for the government members to run around and to say, “Oh, don't worry. Everything is fine. We're giving you all these rebates.” The rebates will all finish, and the chickens will all come home to roost. And as Mr. Ignatieff found out in the last election, when the chickens roost, they ain't clucking no more. They just stop clucking. That's all I can tell you. Boy, oh, boy.

Can you believe it, Madam Speaker? Never in the history of Ontario has the Liberal Party come third in almost 90% of the ridings in this province. It's never been seen. If somebody would have told me that a year ago, I wouldn't have believed it. I would have thought that the Liberals were going to drop, that they were not going to form the next government—probably not a majority; maybe a chance at a minority. But, God, they were third almost everywhere.

In my riding, where the Liberals federally have always been sort of the reigning party, the Liberal Party in Timmins–James Bay—Algoma–Manitoulin had been Liberal since Confederation. That was Mr. Pearson's riding, the Right Honourable Lester Pearson, Prime Minister of Canada. That riding went NDP the last time and, with Carol Hughes, it came back again and they increased the majority of the vote, and the Liberals ended up in third—unheard of. If you would have said to me “a \$100 bet,” I wouldn't have taken it. But it tells you that people have caught onto this. It tells you that the people of Ontario are saying, “You know what? You ain't fooling me. At the end of the day, I know that these are temporary measures and that I'm going to be paying more after the next election. Let me get at you. Let me get to my ballot and the ballot box.” I think that's what you're going to see in the next election.

It goes on to say—I'm about halfway through this particular motion; it's quite interesting—“Recognizes that with Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth, the economy is turning the corner by creating more than 293,000 new jobs since the global recession....”

I think you should all take a bow; I really do. Everything's wonderful in Ontario. I want you to go to every riding in Ontario, every community you can between now and October 6, and I want you to tell people that they're doing better. I want you to look them in the eye and tell them that and see the response you get.

I was in White River last Monday—here's my week last week. I was in White River on Monday. Boy, oh, boy, are people feeling the pinch over there. The only employer has shut down. Dubreuilville, where the only employer has shut down, was the other community I was speaking to from that community as well. People are

hurting. Nobody's going to tell you that they're any better off.

Then I went to Niagara Falls at the end of the week, on Friday. I went in there Thursday night for a debate on Friday morning, and I'll tell you, other than tourism—thank God for tourism and thank God for the casino in Niagara Falls, because there's not a lot else going on. There was a whole bunch of industry that used to exist in the Niagara Peninsula that is completely gone. It's almost like you pick up the paper, and every week—at least every month—there is closure after closure after closure of plants across the southwestern part of the province.

So please, yes, go into Welland-Thorold, go into London, go into Hamilton, go into Sarnia, go into Timmins, go into Attawapiskat, go anywhere you want and tell people in the next election, "Vote for me because your life is better—seven years of the Liberal government." Please do that. I invite you to do that. I want you to do that, because I can tell you, they're going to reject you. People are hurting.

I'll give you a couple of stories from where I come from, Madam Speaker. You hear me often talk about northern Ontario; well, that's where I come from. As you come from Toronto and you talk about communities in your area, I'm going to talk about the people in my end of the province.

We'll do a little tour on Highway 11. We're just going to start from, let's say, Cochrane. It's a good place to start. Cochrane: one mill down. Smooth Rock Falls: the only mill gone, closed permanently. Hardly anything going on in between, and you get to Kapuskasing: Tembec is running, with a couple of shifts still there. Tembec, Kapuskasing—I've got to say that we've been lucky. We've been doing better than most. The good news in Kapuskasing is Tembec. The other good news is the reconstruction of the power dams, about \$3 billion, that Ontario Hydro or OPG is doing up there.

Keep on going: In Opatatika, the only mill in town is shut down permanently.

Go to Hearst: It's the same kind of story. There's closure, reductions of shifts. People are struggling to keep their doors open. Columbia Forest Products is doing better these days, but is still having a tough time. There are far fewer workers there than there were before. At Tembec, across the street, it's the same story.

Go into Lecours Lumber in Constance Lake—the same story. They're on layoff now until sometime, I believe, in June.

It's the story as you travel across northern Ontario on Highway 11, from one end of the province to the other, from Cochrane all the way over to wherever you want to go on Highway 11. It's community after community that has lost their employers. They're down.

You go into places like Dubreuilville—Dubreuilville is quite something. Dubreuilville is in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. What happened there is that there used to be a sawmill that was started up by les frères Dubreuil—excuse me; I can't say that in English for

some reason, because it's a French name. That's probably a good reason why.

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Anyway, to cut a long story short, here's a community that had a sawmill. Everything that happens in that community was because of the sawmill. It was a small community of about 1,000 people. The mill employed pretty well everybody. The gas to buy for your car or your pickup is bought from a fuel pump on the mill. So the mill actually sells the gas to the residents because that's the only way you can do it there for the size of the market. Electricity generated comes out of the mill. Everything is tied to that mill. It shut down. The only thing that keeps that mill open today is because they've got to provide some of the basic infrastructure to the municipality.

So here they were, a mill operating about—they had just over a million cubic metres of wood. When the mill shut down, the government didn't do a lot in order to assist that community to try to figure out how to restructure or do whatever to open. The community took it upon themselves. They did a restructuring plan for their mill, and they said, "We can open up at a smaller capacity of 750,000 cubic metres. We need to keep the wood that we had, and we need the 200,000 or 250,000 cubic metres on the Big Pic Forest." Is it the Big Pic there? I may have my forests mixed up, but people will know where I'm driving with this.

Anyway, the long and short of the story: Last Friday or the Friday before, the community of Dubreuilville finds out that the wood that they needed to start up their mill had been allocated to somebody else. What does Dubreuilville do? The only game in town is forestry and they've effectively lost the wood to that community. Why didn't the government tie the wood to those communities so that they're able to make deals with neighbouring communities so that they can all benefit from whatever happens?

Why did they lose it? Because the government announced a good-news announcement in White River, where there is a possibility that there's going to be a biomass plant built to make jet fuel out of fibre from trees. It's a pretty interesting concept. Is there the financing in place for this project? Not yet; I certainly hope there is in the long run. Is this thing for sure going to get off the ground? Mayor Angelo certainly hopes for it; I was talking to him the other day. So do Marg and Mickey and different people that I talk to up in White River. Everybody wants this thing to go, and boy, they want to believe. But as Mickey, who worked in bush land operations for 40 years, was telling me, he's somewhat doubtful because all the government has really done is announced a wood allocation announcement and there's nothing to make the project go forward except for the interest of the proponent. There really isn't anything to ensure that this thing is going to go forward.

I've done some reading since this announcement, and I certainly hope this is technology that we can prove, and I certainly hope this is going to be good news. But the

amount of energy expended to make jet fuel, the amount of energy you'll get out of that jet fuel—you spend more energy growing, cutting, transporting and processing the tree, and making and transporting the fuel than the amount of energy coming out. What that means to me is that the economics of this are going to be very challenging. Is the government doing anything to deal with the challenge that'll be faced with this particular industry?

Is this a good idea? Absolutely. Listen: The problem that we have with all of our sawmills is the market for chips. There are less paper mills and less pulp mills running, so as a result there's no market for the chips for the sawmills. If the sawmills can't sell their chips, they can't operate. If this creates a market to sell the chips, that could be a very good thing. Why didn't the government say in this particular case, "You know what? We've got Dubreuilville, Wawa and other surrounding communities who are trying get up and running. If we structure this in the way that the chips that come from the sawmills in Dubreuilville, Marathon and different places are to go to this particular facility and the wood waste from the sawmills is used as a way of making the fuel, then it becomes a win-win, because then the sawmills have a market for their fuel." It means to say they probably get a premium on their waste wood, which would allow them to reopen their mills and allow the mill that needs the waste wood to make the fuel to be able to access that material to make the fuel. None of that is being done.

My sense is that what we're going to have, if this things gets up and running, is going to be a chipping facility. They're going to go out and cut the 90- or 100-year-old black spruce, jack pine—well, there's not as much jack pine there as there is in my end—birch and tamarack. They're going to take those trees at full length and they're going to chip them. It's a bad end-use policy when it comes to the use of wood, number one, from an environmental point of view, but number two, it does nothing to support the sawmills.

Why didn't the government come up with an approach—and we've been urging the government to do this, as New Democrats—to go to a best-end-use policy? It used to exist in this province. It was established by New Democrats under the leadership of Howard Hampton, when he was MNR minister, and followed up by Bud Wildman, who was the minister of the day—to say, "Listen: We know that the entire industry is able to survive if there are those synergies. If the sawmills can cut the tree, can use it for dimensional lumber, sell the waste wood to a market such as a pulp and paper mill or a biomass plant, so that we're able to use all of the scraps in the woods that are left on the ground—the tops and branches and the rest of it—and we can turn that into biofuel, it's a win-win for everybody. It's great for the environment, it's great for the workers, it's great for the communities and it's great for the companies. They can make some money."

But the government didn't do that. So when the government says in this motion—I should say again that it's

the Liberal Party, not so much the government: "Recognizes that with Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth, the economy is turning the corner by creating more than 293,000 new jobs since the global recession," you know that the government is having to say this because a lot of people are feeling as if none of that is really happening, that in fact what we've got going on is, people have lost their jobs, and the jobs that are being created are, quite frankly, jobs that are lesser-paid than those they came from. They're feeling the pinch.

It goes on to say, "Rejects the introduction of a carbon tax as a measure that would hurt Ontario's economic growth..." it's interesting that they had to put that in. Think about it. They must be doing some polling. The Liberal Party of Ontario must be doing some polling to find out that people somehow think that the government is in favour of a carbon tax, because why else would they put this particular issue in the motion? Again, I say: Why did the government come forward with such a motion at a time two weeks before the House rises before an election? It's because, quite frankly, the Liberal Party is feeling rather—how would you say?—harried by the public, is feeling very vulnerable as a result of policies that they've introduced, and so people are really worried. I think—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm coming to that.

So why did they put this in? I think it's a reflection of the unpopular federal Liberal Party under Mr. Ignatieff, and they're trying to find some way to put distance between the lacklustre leadership and performance of the Liberal Party in the last election and themselves. I say that the Liberals have nobody else to blame but themselves. I think the Liberal Party of Canada is a dying brand. It's a reality.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, you were third in the last federal election. The Liberals still haven't accepted the loss.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One election, Gilles. Come on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They still have not accepted the loss, Madam Speaker. The reality is, the Liberal Party of Canada got whopped in the last election by both the Conservatives and New Democrats, depending on what province you were in. The quicker the Liberal Party recognizes that they got whopped, the better off. Why do I know that? Because I've been whopped before. I understand what it's like.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, but you came up, to live again.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, and it takes a while. What you need to do, and what the Liberal Party is not doing at this point, is to recognize that they are unpopular, that they owe it to the people of Ontario to be straight about their failures and their successes, and the only thing that they want to do is talk about the successes and not admit that they've had a lot of failures.

Come October 6, I think the people of Ontario in this next provincial election are going to say in volumes what

they feel about the Liberal Party. I can tell you—don't take it from me. We were polling, prior to the last federal election, in our party, and in their incumbent ridings, the Liberals were running third—incumbent ridings in this House. I would have never thought that would have been the case, but I think there are a lot of people who are upset over this Liberal Party and their management of policies in this province that have not done them well.

In the last few minutes, the last part of this thing—it ends as follows: “Rejects an increase”—Madam Speaker, this just beyond funny—“to the HST rate or a decrease to the rate...” Why do they have to say, “Rejects an increase to the HST rate or a decrease to the rate”? They're opposed to both an increase and a decrease on the HST. I'll tell you why: because there's a fear in Ontario—and the Tories are priming that fear—that the Liberals are going to raise the HST.

1710

Now, I would have thought nobody was stupid enough to do the HST in the first place. Oh, I take that back; that's not a nice word that I just said. I want to take it back.

Nobody would have thought that any political party would be as politically naive as to create an HST and raise taxes in the middle of a recession. Not even Bob Rae would have done that. But the Liberal Party did it. And the fact that there are some fears on the part of some, founded or unfounded, that they were prepared to raise and create an HST in the middle of a recession—that they would be prepared to raise it if they were re-elected and the economy was to turn around or not turn around.

So I think the government is again trying to inoculate itself. It's trying to say, “Trust me. I ran the last time that I wouldn't raise your taxes—whoops, I didn't do that. But I promise it again.” That's essentially what they're saying here.

The Liberals—I really get a kick out of it—defence is, “Oh, my God, look at Nova Scotia.” In Nova Scotia, the Darrell Dexter NDP government raised the HST there. And you know what? The people of Nova Scotia will have to pass judgment on that, not the people in Ontario. It'll be up to the people in Nova Scotia to decide if they thought that was or wasn't a good move. Was it something I would have done? Probably not. I don't think raising taxes in a recession is a smart thing to do.

I'm not on this bandwagon of the right wing that says, “Get rid of taxes; everything will work.” Well, they did that in the United States. They're running trillion-dollar deficits in the United States. They had a Republican President in the White House, and they had a great time doing the tax cut agenda in the United States, and all they've managed to do is, by stealth, to get rid of public services by not funding them. That's what they've essentially done. Oh, no, excuse me; they do spend money on something—it's called the military. They have no problem spending billions of dollars on the military. They don't see anything wrong with that. Their deficit spending in that country is crazy. So I don't buy this

whole argument of the right wing that cutting taxes is going to create jobs.

Is there room for targeted tax cuts? Absolutely. If the government wants to talk about, “You know what? I have a program. You go and create some jobs and I'm going to help you by way of training. Go and create some jobs, and I'm going to help you by other forms of relief and, yes, maybe even some kind of tax measure.” I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I say that as a New Democrat. But across-the-board tax cuts? Give me a break. We're giving tax cuts to the banks and other wealthy companies in Canada and the United States, and all they're doing is making more money. They're not doing anything to help the lives—did you see the interest rate on your credit card go down last month, as the banks make more record profits, as we give them tax breaks? Did you see loans become easier to get or your loans become easier to pay because of reduced interest rates? Absolutely not. Every time I turn around now, I get a fee from my bank. I get a fee for this, a fee for that and a fee for other things I don't know nothing about. They don't even publish how much money they make on fees. So here we are giving these people tax breaks, and they're not giving it back to us. So I say they've got to be targeted.

Andrea Horwath, leader of the New Democratic Party, is completely right on this. Jack Layton is completely right on this one. For a little while, maybe Mr. Ignatieff started to see the light, that you can't do across-the-board tax cuts. They just don't work, and the proof of that is, this government in Ontario, under the Liberals, and the federal government in Canada, under the Conservatives, have been having a great old time giving corporate tax cuts, and it has not led to the job creation that they talk about.

In this motion, they say, “And rejects an increase to the HST rate or a decrease to the rate that would benefit the wealthiest Ontarians...” They're saying on the one hand that they're opposed to an increase—because they're afraid people might think they might increase it—then they say they're also opposed to a decrease. My God, talk about a Liberal fence. They're straddling that fence pretty hard, trying not to come down on one side or the other. I think it's a pretty weird way of wording a motion.

Then it says, “And rejects an increase to the HST rate or a decrease to the rate that would benefit the wealthiest Ontarians the most, take \$3 billion out of health care and education funding and harm Ontario's economic recovery.” They're taking more than \$3 billion out—give me a break. The tax breaks that they've given corporations in this province—I think we're up to something like \$2.7 billion that we've given back in corporate tax cuts. How can the government make an argument that diverting money from taxation is going to eliminate revenue to pay for these services when they're doing it themselves?

I just say to the government that it's a pretty oddly worded motion.

I say to the government, tell whoever your Liberal strategists are, and the Liberal Party of Ontario, that this

type of motion is best debated during an election. If you want to go out and have that debate during an election, please bring it on. That would be a very good debate for all of us to have in the next provincial election on the hustings and in all-candidates meetings. But for the government to bring forward a motion like this when they're saying they've got more interesting things to do is just going to slow the House down, because you're baiting the opposition to debate you on what is such a bad record of this particular government.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have 20 minutes this afternoon on this particular motion. We have a number of our members who are going to be speaking on this today as we sit late into this evening. I understand we're having night sittings starting this week. It's Monday, May 16—a week here, a constituency week and then one more week before we break for the summer. I know that night sittings usually begin at this point in the process, and I think that tonight we're going to be here until 9:30 or 10 o'clock, and I know there are four or five other members from our party who want to speak on this.

Before I get into the main part of my remarks, I just want to remark on the remarks of the Conservative member from Nepean–Carleton who spoke at some length about an hour and a bit ago, I suppose, and spent at least 50% to 60% of her time reading a list of items to which the new harmonized sales tax applies. I guess I'd just offer her a little bit of information: If she chooses to rise again and speak for that length of time, perhaps she could simply say to the people of the province of Ontario that we've merged our list with the federal list, and so everything you've been paying the GST on for 20 years is what you're going to pay the HST on.

The reason I mention that is that the official opposition here, the Conservatives in the province of Ontario, tend from time to time to refer to Stephen Harper and the federal Conservative government somewhat like the Messiah, and yet today they're very much criticizing a policy, the GST, that has been in place federally for close to 20 years. The GST has been applied federally to all those things for close to 20 years. So when you merge the tax system, ipso facto, that's what's going to follow. But the member chose to spend 30 minutes or so reading a list.

The Conservative government of Stephen Harper voted and passed legislation to create and allow for the HST in the province of Ontario. It was supported by three of the four parties. I've said before here in this House that the provincial Conservative Party, I think, has lost a lot of credibility when it comes to this particular policy. I know it's an opportunity for them, God bless them. I understand that. They see some political opportunity here, and that is translated into the position they've taken on the HST.

But I would suggest it is glaringly obvious to anybody who is following this debate at all that when the federal Conservative government passes a law allowing us to go

forward with it, and a Prime Minister who is an economist by training and is as ideologically opposed, I would suggest, to increasing taxes as any Prime Minister we've had in a long, long time endorses this policy and allows the province of Ontario, through federal legislation, to go forward with it—and on top of that, he gives the province of Ontario over \$4 billion to help with the transition to the single sales tax—perhaps sometime in the near future, when the provincial Conservatives choose to stand up and speak at length in opposition to the HST, they'll have an opportunity to address that glaring contradiction in their argument.

People know this. They can try to pull the wool over people's eyes all they want, but people who follow this know that it's good tax policy. The member who spoke just before me called it crazy. I guess there are 144 countries and four other provinces that are crazy. To this point, we've not heard either of the two opposition parties say they would repeal the single sales tax, and we all know why.

1720

When this motion was brought in, the reason I think it's necessary is that for the longest time in the province only half, I would say, if not even less of the story is being told when it comes to the tax reform we've brought in in the province of Ontario. The tax reform—the other half or more that's not being spoken about by either of the opposition parties—is the significant tax reductions that we have brought in, permanent, significant tax reductions, to personally help people in the province of Ontario. There is a long list of them. People will have likely seen communications from each of the members within their ridings on this topic.

Rather than go through a long, boring list of permanent tax reductions, what I like to tell people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan in terms of explaining this tax policy and why it's working is simply this: If it's so bad, as the opposition parties would have you believe, why haven't they announced that they're going to repeal it? If it's so bad, why did three federal parties vote in favour of it? If it's so bad, why did Stephen Harper transfer \$4.3 billion to Ontario to help us do it? If it's so bad, why are the poverty groups not marching on the front lawn of Queen's Park? Why is the daily food bank supportive of this policy? Why are the people that could be most adversely affected by tax policy not marching on the front lawn of Queen's Park? I ask that in all seriousness.

It's a pretty simple way of talking about it, because when I go to the doors, for me to have to stand there and try to explain tax credits to people and reductions in personal income tax—well, like most of us, their eyes glaze over very quickly. But when I ask them to ask the Conservatives or the NDP why those groups support this, they stop and they think for a little while: “Yes, why aren't poverty groups opposed to this?” They stop and think when I tell them that seniors' organizations are not opposed to the HST. They stop and they think. It's simple.

I've tried the longer explanation, where I talk about personal income tax reductions. I talk about the Ontario

seniors' property tax grants and the energy and property tax credits that have significantly reduced the burden on seniors and all homeowners in the province of Ontario. I talk to them about that, but it's really hard to hold people's attention—for me, too, if people are talking to me that way.

But when I ask them, "Why aren't seniors' organizations that represent the interests of seniors opposed to this? Why aren't the food banks and the poverty groups opposed to this?"—because they know it's not bad, and they know the other half of the story that nobody else wants to talk about. They know that, on balance, the left-leaning think tanks—the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which is more in line philosophically with the NDP than with anybody else—know it's not a bad thing and they support it.

Yet the rhetoric will not change. We see the election. We've known for some time what the focus would be. They'll campaign on the HST like Chicken Little: "The sky is falling." But the evidence is not there.

I've got some evidence that I'll share with you as well. Since the depths of the recession, Ontario has now recovered—is it 115% or 125%?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think it's 117%.

Mr. Bill Mauro: About 115%, 117% of the jobs lost, in other words, since the recession we've gained back. And over 90% of them—here's another myth being circulated, that they're all poor-paying, low-paying jobs—are full-time jobs.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, let me give you a few examples of good, full-time jobs. In the Bombardier plant in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, \$1.4 billion of provincial government investment; \$3.5 billion or so in contracts; 500 to 600 more people employed at that plant today—big jobs, good jobs with good benefits. Total employment in the plant today is at 1,000 people. It has not been that high for a long time.

There's a couple of Conservatives in the House today. The plant employees at Bombardier in my riding will remember very clearly that it was a Mike Harris government that very much announced, "We're not in the mass transit game. We're not investing in mass transit anymore. That's the city of Toronto's responsibility." And do you know what happened? Nothing happened forever, and the plant in Thunder Bay came close to closing on a number of occasions. These investments in mass transit are good for the environment, but they've also been very good for the people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan—500 to 600 more jobs. There's incredible diversification going on in the riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan right now.

Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute: 104 jobs right now. We established, or helped to establish, that research institute with \$15 million from the Ministry of Research and Innovation, a ministry that never existed before we came to government and created it. We took the money away from that old group called the Ontario Innovation Trust. We took it away from them—and I was on the committee with the federal finance minister, ac-

tually, when he told me that the money all stays in southern Ontario. When I questioned that, he said, "That's because that's where all the scientists are." I said, "Well, maybe if you spend some money in Thunder Bay, the scientists will follow the money." Sure enough, a short time later, we created the Ministry of Research and Innovation, and \$15 million out of that ministry helped to establish the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute in Thunder Bay, at the health sciences centre—104 big-paying jobs. They plan to be at 200 in very short order.

Tornado Medical imaging systems, just established—an offshoot of the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

RegenMed, a bone and tissue bank, is going to hire 30 people—one of the best places in the country where this is going to occur. There's incredible diversification occurring.

I've got a list here of a whole bunch of other stuff when it comes to the economy, in Thunder Bay specifically, that I could read, and if time permits, maybe I'll get back to that.

But I did want to talk a little bit about forestry, because I've listened to the hoax that has been perpetrated in Ontario primarily by the NDP, I would say, but unfortunately a little bit more—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second, please. I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I withdraw. Okay, I can't use that word. I will use, to replace that—who has got a synonym for that? I would say a misinformation campaign, or a myth, about the forestry industry and somehow our government's responsibility for what has happened in forestry. It's really remarkable. For seven years, they've tried. They won't change their position.

I'm going to read a couple of quotes to you from a gentleman by the name of—and he's speaking specifically about the New Democratic Party. This was in BC a couple of years ago. He's from Canfor, the CEO. His name is Mr. Jim Shepard. He was talking about the NDP in BC, directly related to forestry. He's the CEO of Canfor:

"As New Democratic Party Leader Carole James"—I'm not sure if she still is; maybe my friend from—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: She's not there.

"As New Democratic Party Leader Carole James was telling laid-off forestry workers this week she would help them reclaim their jobs"—and boy, could I speak for an hour just on that line—"the industry's top executives were preparing an unusual frontal assault on her...." Because we all know in this place that we don't usually hear that kind of rhetoric from them.

Here's what Mr. Shepard went on to say: "If the government was to change, heaven help us." He's the president and CEO of Canfor. Usually, he leaves this kind of language to others. He said, "'I see an industry on its knees being taken advantage of by a party that is playing politics.'" That's what Mr. Shepard said.

“The biggest threat to any worker is if the investment community decides forestry is not the place to put their money.” This was his concern about the language coming from the NDP leader.

Here’s the best part. This is the one I like best: “Ms. James”—the former leader of the NDP—“is raising false hope”—I’ve used that language myself in here in the past—“among the province’s 20,000 laid-off forest workers, he added. ‘It’s great to say’”—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Lanark.

Mr. Bill Mauro: “‘It’s great to say we’d like to get people back to work. But we are facing a biological disaster’”—in BC, the pine beetle; that’s the one half of it—“in the interior that is unprecedented and an economic crisis that we haven’t seen the likes of in 80 years.””

Mr. Shepard, who is the CEO of a forestry company, clearly summarized what I’ve been saying in this Legislature for a very, very long time, that primarily the NDP have been trying to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member from Thunder Bay seems intent on bringing information into the Legislature that has nothing to do with what’s going on in Ontario. He’s actually talking about—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member knows that that is not a point of order. Thank you.

Continue, please.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate that. I know that they don’t like to be reminded about Stephen Harper supporting the single sales tax.

1730

But on the forestry piece, I think it’s—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Just to inform the House, the government has time-allocated this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That’s not a point of order.

The member can continue, please.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you very much, Speaker. And so, unfortunately, it has primarily been the NDP misleading and giving false hope to the people of the province of Ontario affected by the forestry crisis; primarily the NDP, but even more so, unfortunately, the Conservatives, as they attempt to gain a little traction before an election.

Here’s one simple thing I always tell people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan to ask the NDP and ask

the Conservatives when they talk about forestry and electricity prices. They like to try and link the two: What a ridiculously false argument that has been for seven years. It never affected sawmilling in the first place. But you know what? Sawmills and pulp and paper mills started closing in the province of Ontario, as well as the rest of the country—they were closing in the rest of the country in 2004-05. They began closing; the forestry crisis began to hit. We’d been in government in 2004, as I say to my constituents, for like a year. So the member across the way is going to tell the people in Thunder Bay–Atikokan what happened to electricity prices in one year that could possibly have led to the closure of a sawmill or a pulp and paper mill. Their argument has been so blatantly false for so long that it has been remarkable to me that they have maintained the argument. They can’t sell it, but they will continue to try. I appreciate it. They will continue to try to sell that ridiculously false argument.

Here’s another piece that I like to ask people about when I’m speaking to them in Thunder Bay–Atikokan when it comes to the HST. I tell them, “Ask the NDP and ask the Conservatives to explain to you when the last time is that those two parties agreed on tax policy.” If you need any evidence to assure yourself that there is tremendous political opportunity being taken advantage of on the single sales tax, try not to smile when you’re talking to them and ask them to explain how it is that the Conservatives—who, I’ve got to say, are a pretty right-leaning group for the most part; I think there’s a bit of a divided caucus over there, but for the most part certainly their leader and one of the gentlemen over there in the House today are very right-leaning—and a group on the left, who are definitely left; I’m not sure how far left. The two of them agree on tax policy. To my constituents in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I ask them to ask yourself: When is the last time that happened? How do you explain that, on the opposite ends of the political continuum, the Conservatives and the NDP agree that the HST is a bad idea? It’s quite remarkable. I wonder if it might just have a little bit more to do with political opportunity than anything else. I think it’s pretty clear what’s going on here, but try they will.

I have only about two and a half minutes left. I want to make a couple of comments on what has usually been spoken about in the House when it comes to renewables. We saw last week the leader of the official opposition make his comments about, if he had the privilege of being the Premier, he’d cancel the \$7-billion Samsung deal. I guess he just chose that language so that people in the province would think \$7 billion represents a cost to them when in fact the \$7 billion is a private sector investment into the province of Ontario. That’s what the \$7 billion is. That’s how much they’re committed to investing in province of Ontario—16,000 or 20,000 jobs already created in the green energy sector.

On the front page of the Thunder Bay paper today, when I flew down from Thunder Bay, there was a wonderful big picture of a 100-year-old church, St. Andrew’s

Presbyterian Church, right down by city hall in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan: a big front-page picture of them with solar panels. A 100-year-old church just entered into a 20-year FIT contract to generate—I forget the amount of energy they’re going to create. This is another example of what the Conservative leader has decided he will cancel.

I have a lot of people in my riding who are concerned very much about the fact that he continues to talk about cancelling green energy programs. I’ve got two coal plants. We’re the only party that committed to converting them. I’ve got two in my riding we’re going to convert; 230 people are going to keep their jobs and about \$300 million worth of construction to convert both those plants. That sounds like a green energy project to me, but I guess perhaps the Conservatives don’t support that either.

The other thing they’re doing on renewables is, of course, trying to link this incredible transformation that’s happening in our energy sector to price increases on their hydro bills. The reality of it is that all of the renewables, once they’re on stream—and they’re not all on stream now—will represent about 10% to 13%—I forget the exact number—of the total produced capacity of energy in the province. The total produced capacity from renewables contemplated right now will be about 10% to 13%. They will not have a marginal impact.

Now, the opposition has an opportunity to tell us what they’re going to do on energy. They haven’t yet. We have rebuilt 5,000 kilometres of transmission line. We’ve brought thousands of megawatts of new energy on to the system. We need it. We don’t know how they’re going to do it. Apparently they have some magic way of investing in a system that requires the investment and not increasing people’s energy bills. Perhaps they will have an opportunity to explain that.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s my pleasure to have the opportunity to debate this interesting government motion this afternoon. Maybe before I start on that, I should just correct the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I’m sure he didn’t realize that he was mistaken when he mentioned the member from Nepean–Carleton and her reading a list of items that the HST applied to. She was actually reading a list of items that the sneaky eco tax brought in on July 1 applied to. I happen to have it here. It applies to thousands and thousands and thousands of varied objects, so I just correct the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

To today’s motion, it is certainly an interesting one. It is certainly quite political. It goes on and on about all the wonderful things that the government is doing and wants us to believe that are actually happening. Then, towards the end of the motion, it says, “Rejects the introduction of a carbon tax as a measure that would hurt Ontario’s economic growth; and

“Rejects an increase to the HST rate or a decrease to the rate that would benefit the wealthiest Ontarians the

most, take \$3 billion out of health care and education funding and harm Ontario’s economic recovery.” So a very political motion for sure this afternoon.

Like my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, I want to start out by reading a quote from Premier McGuinty from April 4, 2011, in Hansard. He said, “A very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past.” Let’s talk about Premier’s McGuinty’s record because it will go a long way to predicting what the future holds for Ontario if he is re-elected in October. Before the 2003 election, Premier McGuinty said he would not raise taxes but he wouldn’t lower them as well.

I remember seeing that. I didn’t know the Premier that well at that point, but I watched him on TV and saw him signing a declaration with a flourish. I took him at his word and I thought, “I guess he’s not a tax-and-spend Liberal; maybe he’s not as bad as I’m worried he might be, that he might take the province’s economic fortunes and flush them down the toilet and get us into a really bad situation.” I think a lot of other people in the province of Ontario believed him as well.

In fact, he did go on and sign a pledge. Let’s me read that pledge into the record. It read, “I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will: not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters....” That is pretty clear. He signed it. He did it on TV. That’s pretty darned clear. We all remember, of course, after that the commercials, the ones that he ran more than 200 times during the election campaign. I would think that if he’s running 200 election ads, that is maybe something you expect him to fulfill after he’s elected.

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We all know what the Premier did after he got the keys to the Premier’s office: He brought in the health tax. It’s the single largest income tax grab in the history of Ontario, taking \$3 billion a year out of the pockets of Ontario families.

My colleague read some of the charts into the record earlier today. Let me just give an illustration of how the health tax works. If you make \$20,000 a year, you pay \$60 in extra health taxes. So, if you get a 5% increase in your wages so you get \$21,000 a year, the Premier—he’s so greedy—would double your health tax to \$120. You work harder, and Premier McGuinty taxes you more.

Also, if you make \$25,000 a year, just \$4,000 more, you pay \$300 in health taxes. That’s a 500% increase if you have the good fortune to make \$480 a week. That’s almost an entire week’s salary. Looking at the chart, you can pay as much as \$900 in health tax. One individual can pay as much as \$900.

That was 2003. That’s what he did after he wrote on a pledge that he wouldn’t raise taxes.

Then, 2007 rolls around—another election. In that election, he denied that he would raise taxes. When told by his critics that the critics wouldn’t believe him, he said, “They’re wrong, they’re wrong, they’re wrong.” That’s pretty definitive, again.

After the vote, after the 2007 election, he was successful and, with no warning, he broke his promise again and brought in the \$3-billion HST tax grab. So there's now HST on hydro bills, of course, we know, and hydro bills are skyrocketing.

On the very same day, on July 1, 2010, that the McGuinty government brought in the HST, as cover, they brought in the eco taxes on more than 9,000 items that Ontario families use every day. I'm not going to read the whole thing because I don't have time to read the whole thing, but it was on things like a sharpening kit, a level—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. There's a lot of chatter across the aisle, and it's difficult to hear the member speak. Let's give him the floor, please.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka again.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The list of items on the eco tax—things like a torch kit, butane, a clock radio—I've heard situations where people have bought a clock radio that was valued at \$9.95 and the eco tax was \$2.75 that they snuck in, and they didn't try to tell people how it might make a difference. In fact, I don't think it would make a difference. They've since temporarily retracted that one.

We hear the struggles from Ontario families every day as they face these increased taxes, but it didn't end there. Thanks to the McGuinty government, Ontario families are faced with increased taxes through tire taxes, eco taxes, electronic taxes, the diamond tax, hidden hydro taxes, destination marketing taxes and higher beer, wine and spirits taxes, just to name a few.

I recall when the diamond tax was coming in—here we had the first diamond mine ever in Ontario, west of Attawapiskat, Ontario. The government was a little sneaky on that one too. De Beers invested millions and millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, developing this new mine. They were partway through developing the mine, and the government changed the rules. They doubled the diamond tax. In fact, I remember being here at a meet-the-miner reception here at Queen's Park. It's usually a friendly sort of event, and the representatives used that opportunity to say how devastating this would be where they changed the rules midway through the game and how it would scare investment away and jobs away from Ontario.

Actually, when the leader of our party, Tim Hudak, was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Ontario was the number one jurisdiction in the world to invest in for the mining sector. Unfortunately, we're far down the list now under the McGuinty government.

Going on with some of these new taxes to establish this pattern that the government has brought in—of course, they've brought in the harmonized sales tax. That's about \$3.1 billion a year. They brought in the Ontario health tax. That's about \$3.1 billion. They've increased business taxes; about \$1.2 billion. Of course, the debt retirement charge on hydro bills—it should be paid off by now—is \$931 million a year. Income tax

hikes of \$900 million; property tax hikes, \$450 million; the hidden hydro tax, \$53 million; eco fees, \$39.4 million; electronic taxes, \$71 million; the tire tax, \$70 million.

Last week the McGuinty Liberals had a chance to reject tax increases. We had a motion on the floor, but they voted that down. You might ask, why is that? Because they're keeping their options open.

Then, on Wednesday, the finance minister said that a McGuinty government will not raise or lower taxes. You may have heard that before. They've established a clear pattern. Before an election, they state very clearly they won't raise taxes. The election happens and, all of a sudden, in comes some form of new tax.

The question this time around might be, what new tax might they be thinking about increasing? We do know that the government is running a substantial deficit. In fact, a recent article by Martin Regg Cohn entitled "Ontario's Scary Debt Numbers" stated, "Behind closed doors, however, the province's financial brain trust has been shown a different slide show"—they were talking about the Premier's slide show where he's been going around the province creating a very rosy picture of the government's finances—"one that casts the rapidly rising debt in a darker light: As the debt burden has soared, Ontario has fallen embarrassingly behind most other provinces.

"The Premier's smooth messaging and selective PowerPointing can't sugar-coat the grim data that the province's number crunchers are sharing among themselves. Digging itself out of debt won't be nearly as easy for Ontario as McGuinty makes out in public."

He goes on, illustrating this: "The most daunting numbers compare Ontario's finances in 2003-04, when the McGuinty government took power, to the present day. Back then, Ontario's debt was a healthier 28% of GDP—with only the western provinces doing better.

"In 2010-11 the roles are reversed, with Ontario saddled by debt that has reached 36% of GDP—higher than any province except Nova Scotia and Quebec. On a per capita basis, Ontario is borrowing more debt than any province except New Brunswick...."

That's an article illustrating Ontario's scary debt numbers, and that's a predictor of why we can see this pattern of election and then tax increase happening again, because the government has greatly ramped up spending since 2003 and they continue to do so.

We know that this past year they had a \$17-billion deficit, they're looking a \$16-billion deficit this year and it continues in double digits for many years. In their own budget, if you read what they're talking about, "Effective Management of Debt," what do they say? "Increased debt leads to increased borrowing costs, which squeezes the overall amount of funding available for future health care, education and social programs. Accordingly, it is important to manage the levels and cost of government borrowing."

This year the Ontario government is spending some \$10.2 billion on interest payments to service the debt, and they're predicting that number, as they keep adding more

and more debt, to go up to some \$16 billion in just a few short years. That's more and more money that they're spending. They have not been able to restrain spending. We saw two years ago in the budget where they declared that they were going to have a freeze, and the only freeze we've seen is in the non-unionized part of the government workforce, but the great, vast majority of the workforce has seen increases. In fact, we learned last week about a secret 1% increase that conveniently happens beyond the next provincial election for 38,000 OPSEU workers. What do you think that does to the negotiations with all the other unions when you've got a secret side deal that nobody is supposed to know about? In fact, the government lawyer went to court trying to maintain its secrecy.

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The government has not been able to restrain spending. If they're not able to restrain spending—they keep coming up with new ways to spend money—what's the other option? There is only one other option other than continuing to run these huge, huge, huge deficits, and that is to bring in new taxes. That's why we say that based on the track record of the government, they're very likely to bring in new taxes.

Look at the debt: They're on track to double the debt of the province of Ontario. They had a \$16.7-billion deficit last year, \$16.3 billion planned for this year, \$15 billion the year after, \$13.3 billion the year after that. But that doesn't give the total picture of all the borrowing. The government actually borrowed some \$39.9 billion last year. They're greatly piling up the debt of the province of Ontario. How are they going to pay for their spending, which they haven't been able to control? With future taxes.

Just today there was an article on the fact the government is changing the funding for municipalities. I had an article here, which I think I've lost now, to do with the OLG changing the accounting system so that municipalities which were supposed to get 5% of the slot machine revenue would no longer get as much as they had in the past. I know one mayor is quoted in that article as stating that he just sees this as "another tax grab."

The government has a very clear track record. I just think that there's a lack of credibility here. I note that economists Neils Veldhuis and Charles Lammam are measuring the fiscal performance of Canada's Premiers. They are emphatic in their position that Ontario's 2011 budget just isn't believable. They were troubled by Mr. Duncan's rhetoric when he said, "Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline," or when he described his plan to tackle Ontario's deficit as a "prudent, proven and responsible approach ... to the challenge of the deficit."

Since being elected in 2003, Premier Dalton McGuinty has proven he is grossly inadequate in managing

Ontario's finances. In the recent report by the Fraser Institute, *Measuring the Fiscal Performance of Canada's Premiers*, Premier McGuinty was found to have performed the worst among 10 provincial Premiers at managing the government's spending, tax policies, deficits and debt.

In keeping with his reputation as a spendaholic, the Premier's deficit reduction plan allows deficits to continue until 2017 and 2018, and plans to add another \$67.5 billion in debt due to deficits from the current fiscal year through to 2017-18. In fact, as the Fraser Institute economists point out, Mr. McGuinty's plan means that provincial debt will swell to 40.6% of gross domestic product in 2014-15, from 29% in 2008-09.

Rather than cut spending, the McGuinty government is counting on restrained spending growth at an annual rate of 2% and higher revenues. As much as I'd like to believe that, there is no foundation in fact for this assumption. Mr. McGuinty has never, ever held spending down. In fact, spending has increased, since 2003 when he was first elected, some 76%. It was about \$70 billion in 2003 and they're planning on spending \$124 billion this year.

As I just have a couple of minutes left, let me just come to a conclusion. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has pointed out it took 23 Premiers 136 years to accumulate Ontario's first \$148 billion in debt. Premier McGuinty will single-handedly double that number in his eight years in office.

Now, before the 2011 election, the Liberals and Premier McGuinty are making promises—let me again read that quote from Premier McGuinty from April 4, 2011, from Hansard: "A very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past." That is why Ontario families don't want pledges or promises this time. They don't want them because they simply do not believe Premier McGuinty will keep his word. They want a guarantee. When it comes to taxes, there's only one guarantee the Premier will give them: He'll raise taxes. He can't help it; it's what he does.

An Ontario PC government will take a different approach: We will not raise taxes. An Ontario PC government will lower taxes across the board, and finally give Ontario families the respect they deserve and the relief they need.

I'm sure other speakers from our party will go on to illustrate further concerns. It's just been a pleasure this afternoon to have the opportunity to speak.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being just before 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stands recessed until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 1756 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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