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Wednesday 29 February 2012

Mercredi 29 février 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 February 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 février 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES
ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS
NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 28, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to stand in my place and join the debate here this morning on Bill 34. I'm going to begin my remarks today by pointing out that we in the Progressive Conservative caucus, on this side of the House, will be supporting this legislation and supporting its passage on second reading.

Before the members on the government side all stand and rise in rapturous applause, I want to caution them: That could be the last good thing I have to say in this hour about them. There are going to be lots of good things, but I won't be singing their praises about bringing forth this legislation, because we're going to get down to the bare bones, Speaker, about why we're here debating this legislation before the House today.

The Public Works Protection Act—it's almost a tongue twister, I know—was passed in 1939. There are only a couple or a few, maybe, members of this Legislature who were even born in 1939, and only one could have actually understood what might have been going on in 1939. That's how long ago it was, Mr. Speaker. We have to put it into context about what was going on in 1939.

In September of that year, Hitler's Nazis invaded Poland, and there began the Second World War. As an ally of Poland and one that had an agreement with them, it brought Britain into the war; and as a member of the Commonwealth, that brought Canada into the war.

However, the United States was not compelled at that time to join the war. The Canadian government passed the War Measures Act, and the Ontario government of the time passed the Public Works Protection Act as a defence mechanism to ensure that they could protect their infrastructure at a time of war or possible terrorist attack, and particularly, I suppose, because the Americans were not in the war with them—although for all practical purposes we all know that the Americans were part of that war from day one and financed a great part of it, until the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941. But even before that, you may recall, Speaker, that the ship Reuben James, an American ship that had acted as a protector for supply convoys going across the Atlantic, was destroyed by a Nazi U-boat prior to Pearl Harbour, and the history of the day will tell you that Hitler was extremely upset at the time because he was trying not to do anything to inflame the emotions of the Americans and bring them into that war sooner.

I just want to talk a little bit about what it was like at the time. We understand why—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wasn't around. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was pointing out that I wasn't around. No, I wasn't around. In fact, I wasn't born for many years after that.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I was close to being conceived.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wasn't even close; my parents weren't yet married. But my father was a veteran of that war.

We have to understand what the mindset of the day was. If you look at this House—of course, there's no one in this House today who would have served in the Second World War or the Korean war, but in my dad's day, when he served in this House from 1963 to 1987, it was populated with many folks who had served in either of those wars. When he got here, maybe there was a veteran here from the First World War; I don't know.

It gives people a better understanding, I think; the members of the Houses in those days, too, had a more collegial understanding of one another, particularly members of the House who did serve in the wars, because they had a tremendously life-changing experience that none of us can pretend to know about, not having actually experienced it ourselves. We can read the history

books and we can talk to those people who did participate in those great events—and I don't say that in a positive way, just in the magnitude of them in our history.

I know that my dad never talked about the war. I only found out, actually, from my younger brother, who—obviously, there are some Yakabuskis out there who are pretty smart. He studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. I never made it there. But my dad went over to visit him one time—and he's very fluently bilingual, in both Quebecois and Parisian French, I might say. My dad went over there to visit him one time, and that was the time that Mark found out that dad fought in the battle of Caen—huge battles after the invasion of Normandy, when the allies thought that Caen would be a natural same-day victory. It turned out to be a mess for months that resulted in many, many casualties on both sides. But as I say, he never talked about the war. I never got this information from him; I only found out about it from my brother. I suppose it should give me reason to want to research my own father's military record in a more extensive way, because I think it behooves us all to understand the sacrifices that people who went to war in those days—and still do; those who defend our interests across the world in Afghanistan and other theatres of war—we owe them a great debt of gratitude.

0910

But for my own part, I think it would behoove me, on a personal basis, to have a full compilation of what my own father's war record was, because I can tell you, I didn't get much from him. A lot of people who fought in that war were not really into talking about it: It wasn't a good time of their lives. It was a good time from the point of view that if they had to do it over again, I know each and every one of them would have stood up for their country and did it again. But it wasn't all fun and games as we enjoy the good life today, partly and substantially, I should say, on the efforts of those who came before us.

So I'm putting it into context a little bit. I've actually heard more about my dad's wartime from a couple of folks. When I was campaigning in my riding in the different elections, I've run into people who actually served in the military in the Second World War with my dad who are still living. One of them, Hayden Francis, I see quite often. In fact, I saw Hayden a couple of weeks back—90 years old and he has got to be chasing 91 if he hasn't turned already—walking down the street in Pembroke as I was driving to my constituency office, looking spry and as sharp as ever. I just had a brief conversation with Hayden, and he has always given me some recollections of his time with my dad in the war. One of the things they did when they came back, Hayden Francis and my dad, was they actually volunteered to go to Japan after the war with Germany had ended, while that battle was still raging.

Another gentleman, George Skerkowski—I saw George last week—served with Dad in the war as well. And where did I see George? George is a resident now of the Quail Creek retirement home in Renfrew. I was in there singing during the intersession time for the residents, and

I had a chat with George. But I also saw George just last week at the funeral of Charlie Lemenchick in Renfrew, another World War II veteran who has now left this world to the next. Charlie, of course, was one of the great athletes in the town of Renfrew's history, and we all knew him well. I've been a good friend of the family for many, many years. We're certainly going to miss Charlie, as Renfrew will for sure. But again, I had a chance to talk to George, who is also 90 years old and doing very, very well.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just bringing into context what it was like in those days and why the Public Works Protection Act was a necessary thing at the time. It was a necessary piece of legislation. In fact, Speaker, you may be aware that—just the mindset of what Canada was like during those times, and particularly in the early part of the war. Everything was going Hitler's way. I mean, he started the war on his terms, on his time. Quite frankly, because of the wishes of the rest of the world that war would not actually happen, we were not prepared. We were not prepared for the onslaught of the blitzkrieg that the Nazis waged across Europe in the early part of the war. There was a tremendous fear that encapsulated all countries and Canada as well, because we were so aligned with our mother country, Britain.

In fact, in February 1942, in the city of Winnipeg, you may recall they had what they call a what-if day. I sometimes say, "What if I had won the lottery instead of getting elected here." I think when I got elected here—

Hon. John Gerretsen: You did win the lottery.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —I did win the lottery. I thought the member for Kingston and the Islands and the Attorney General was actually snoozing over there. No way. He's listening closely to what I have to say.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Take that back.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I take it back. But yes, I did win the lottery when I got elected here, absolutely. And I almost got to that, but he was quicker than me.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, that's the real lottery. Yeah, you're right, Jim.

Anyway, what-if day: In Winnipeg, on February 19, 1942, they had what they called a what-if day—you know how we do this; it's actually very beneficial. You'll see a hospital do a mock disaster, or the emergency response partners in a community—the paramedics, the hospitals, the police, the fire—will have a mock disaster, just so they can find out how their response people will perform in a simulated situation. The reality is that we don't really want these disasters to happen, but the only way we can test ourselves is if we—it's hard to create a terrible situation in real life, because that's not what we want to see. So they have these mock disasters, and it's a great opportunity, in a simulated way, to see how our first responders conduct themselves and perform under pressure.

So on February 19, 1942, in the city of Winnipeg, they had a what-if day. And the "what if" was, what if the Nazis invaded?

Does everybody remember Orson Welles and the War of the Worlds, and what a panic went on across North America when that was aired? It was Halloween night, I believe, 1930-something—somebody can help me here. Halloween night, 1930-something. Maybe the member from Peterborough might remember. It just caused a great panic as it was broadcast over the airwaves of radio at that time.

So what-if day was, what if the Nazis invaded? People were being interned and were being arrested, and it was quite scary.

But the reason behind it was to get people to buy war bonds. In February 1942, the war had not yet turned. It had not yet turned. Hitler was still winning the war. They were beginning to show some cracks, but he was still winning the war. So that was to try to encourage people to buy war bonds so that the war effort could be supported, because you can't win a war without money. It takes machines, it takes supplies, it takes munitions, and we were fighting a war halfway across the world. So it was very important to raise money.

That's my context, Mr. Speaker, on what it was like. That's my what-if day, 1939.

Now I'm going to get to the why, because that's the question everybody asks when it comes to the handling of the G20 summit here in Toronto and the way—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the member from Durham take it down a couple of notches? I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That gives me a moment to have a pause—the pause that refreshes, as they say.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And only 43 minutes left to go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Let's get back to the order of the day, as they say. What is the mindset and what is the thinking that's going on, or was going on, over there, and a little bit over here at that time, because we still had a government rump on this side of the House. The election of 2011 has taken care of the rump. We're going after the shoulders and the arms in the next one. So the rump is gone. We've got a few more parts of the anatomy that we've got to take care of in the next go-round.

You have to ask yourself, what was the thinking of these people over there?

0920

I heard the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services say yesterday that the police requested this, or something to that effect. I'll paraphrase; I don't have the quote in front of me: The police requested this. Well, I'm going to bet you dollars to doughnuts that Bill Blair and the Toronto police commission, or whoever she refers to when she uses the term "police," did not request the enactment of a regulation under the Public Works Protection Act. What the police may have asked for, Speaker, and rightfully so, is that we've got a major international event going on in this city that will be attended by the leaders of some of the most prosperous

and successful and influential countries of the world—would we like to be able to ensure order? If I'm a police officer, if I'm the chief of police, if I'm the mayor of Toronto, you betcha, I want to ensure order. That's important. We are a leading democracy in this world. We have to set an example and show an example that in this country we can have and do have and will have law and order—absolutely important.

However, the minister is trying to somehow—these folks over here have been here so long they're almost like royalty. I call them the barons of blame, because they are never at fault. It is always someone else's fault.

I see folks over here—my friend from Beaches-East York has been here a lot longer than me. He has seen it all.

Interjection: How long?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I can't tell you. I think 1998 or so.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, 2001. He was the last mayor of East York. They're going to do a—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We seem to be taking it up a couple of decibels over here. I'd appreciate it if we cut it back. And I'd ask the member from Renfrew to speak through the Chair and not to the other members. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. Honestly, I thought I was speaking through the Chair, but I may have lost myself for a moment.

What I was only referring to is, of course, the record of the former mayor from East York and—what was that show? Al Waxman was in it, King of Kensington—I have to wander around sometimes, keep my feet moving, Speaker, because if I stand in one place too long, sometimes I lose my balance and topple over. What was that show? King of Kensington? Al Waxman?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think there's going to be a sitcom someday called "The Last Mayor of East York." I see it coming. Look, Hal Linden could have played you, but that's another matter altogether.

We really need to stick to the matter at hand, and that is the absolute failure of this government when it came to managing its business in the interests of the people and democracy when it invoked regulation 233/10. Remember that one, Speaker: 233/10. That was the regulation that was done behind the closed doors of cabinet. I should say that more like—we should have Rod Serling here: behind the closed doors of cabinet.

It happened while this body, this Legislature that is elected on behalf of the people of Ontario, was sitting. It was sitting. It did not happen during a recess. It didn't happen when there were bombs coming over. There was no emergency. There was a request on the part of the police to give them some assistance in ensuring that they could provide law and order during the summit. That was it. There was no imminent threat. This body—and you, Speaker, were here as a member of this body. You re-

member it well. We were here, prepared to stand on behalf of the people of Ontario. We were here, prepared to debate any legislation brought before us. We were denied. We were denied, as the elected body, and 13 million Ontarians were denied. Why?

I'm going to be coming back, but you know, it just gets so upsetting sometimes, Speaker, I have to just shift a little bit.

But it's kind of the way these folks operate. I'm getting nods. The heads are bowed over there. When you don't want to hear about something, you put your head down. When you don't want to respond to it, you put your head down. Like the young boy Johnny—it's always Johnny. Have you ever noticed that, Speaker? When they're making an example of the boy who has got in trouble, it's always Johnny. Sometimes I wonder about that. I asked my dad sometimes, "Why Johnny?"

But have you ever noticed how Johnny knows he has been caught in the act? This is not a prop, Mr. Speaker. This is the report of the Ontario Ombudsman to this Legislature. Johnny got caught—no, it doesn't say Johnny got caught in the act. It just says Caught in the Act. Well, you know, when Johnny gets caught in the act, his head goes down, and he doesn't really know what to say. But you know what I've always found about Johnny? And I've been that Johnny on more than one occasion. I accept the blame. I know I've been caught. But I do better than just saying, "I'm not going to do it again." I actually accept the punishment.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: He does the honourable thing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I do the honourable thing. Has the honourable thing happened over there? "No," they say. And you know why? Because, technically, nobody got fired over it.

Although, I may point out, Mr. Speaker, that on August 18, 2010—my daughter's 21st birthday, by the way, a beautiful girl. Must be like her mother; I know.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You didn't give me a chance to say that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, I know. I saw it coming, there, to the member from Peterborough. I saw it coming.

I'd fully admit that all of the best qualities that my children have inherited have come from their mother, my beautiful wife, Vicky.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, she is just a saint of a person, as she would have to be, to be married to me. I know. I understand that.

On August 18, 2010, the former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, in a very quiet cabinet shuffle, got shoistered out of his ministry, and the then Minister of the Environment, the member for St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, became the minister.

They were under terrible pressure, because they'd messed it up so bad. The minister should have been fired, just as—and I'm going to just detour a little bit, but I am coming back, Speaker; I am coming back. How can we stand in this Legislature and be proud—on the government side, how can they be proud of what they're doing

when, each and every day, the scandal and the mess at Ornge grows deeper and more troubling to every single citizen of this province who has any objective view of anything?

When they read the horror stories about the stealing—that's what it is—stealing by people at Ornge. It's the taxpayers' money. Unaccounted, \$25 million—that's just the unaccounted. We didn't say the other \$250 million was spent right. It's a mess. But \$25 million isn't even accounted for. Think about that: \$25 million is missing, and the minister stands up and she defends the people at Ornge.

0930

We're not talking about the front-line people. We're not talking about the people who actually go there to assist that individual who is in trouble, whose health is threatened, whose life very well may be threatened. We're not talking about them; we're talking the people who are calling the shots. We're talking about the people who manage that cesspool, because that's what it's become.

Mr. Michael Prue: Mismanaged it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mismanaged it; thank you very much. Their title is management; what they're doing is a joke, and it's a blight on this province. It's a blight on this government, but every day the minister stands in her place and refuses to accept responsibility.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to return to the issue at hand. He seems to have stretched it a little bit. So if you could get back to what we're debating, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know me; I abide absolutely with your guidance, as you have been always kind to give it to me when I'm in need of it.

But I also, when I think of staying to the topic, I think—and I want to beg your indulgence on this one, Speaker—I am very much to the topic, because the reason we are here today is not because the government has enacted Bill 34, which will repeal the Public Works Protection Act. It is very much because—do you think we'd be here today repealing this act that was passed in 1939 if it wasn't for what happened in June 2010? Of course we wouldn't. Do you think some bureaucrat found this under a desk or behind an old Gestetner in one of the offices of one of the ministers, and said, "Oh, my goodness gracious, you know what? We have an act here that was passed in 1939. This is a pressing piece of business for the government. We better write a new act. We better update this. Holy frijole, I'm glad I happened to be cleaning."

No. That's not why we're here, Speaker. We're here because they were caught in the act. That's why we're here. We're not here because the government thought, "Oh, it's a good time to review our legislation." No, no, no. And what I'm trying to point out—and we have limited opportunity in this House, Speaker—is to talk about the mindset of those folks on the other side of the House, and particularly those people who sit in the

cabinet, because everyone knows that's where the real business is going on. Here, this is just practice; it's just like training camp. But the real business is going on in the cabinet, and I see members of the cabinet over there. They don't want to talk about it.

I have some notes here, and I'm going to start to refer to them. One thing about it is, we reached some times where we were—thank you very much. Oh, yes; okay. I just received a note because sometimes it is important to have the names.

So when this decision was made to pass, as I said—because you know me; I'm sticking to the issue. Doggedly, if I say so myself. I'm just looking for the date here, but the date of the passage of 233 is not absolutely important at this moment. But it is important to know that we were sitting as a Legislature. Not all my friends who are here now were here, but many of them were. A lot of the ones over there were. Some of them were in cabinet. Some of them may have been in this meeting that decided to circumvent, as André Marin said, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the invoking of regulation 233/10. Remember that number: 233/10.

Thank you very much, Marium. Marium, your name is in Hansard on the very day that I think we're going to get to the bottom of this.

The whole cabinet was at the table for the passing of the regulation. Also at the table were the members for Peterborough, Ottawa Centre, Ottawa–Orléans, Mississauga–Streetsville, Willowdale, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Ajax–Pickering and Algoma–Manitoulin. They all had seats at the table when this secret regulation, this G20 law, was stamped. So why didn't one of them speak up? While it was becoming apparent that this was a sad event when the events of G20 were taking place, it's interesting from July 9 to 26 when all of this was falling down like—I was going to say like rain, but no, it was like hail, or maybe I should say “hell.”

The Premier was on vacation—nowhere to be seen July 9 to 26. He's the only groundhog that hibernates in the summertime.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, come on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew might want to retract the “groundhog” comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just while we're still in the month of Warton Willie, I just thought that I wanted to make some reference to an iconic symbol up in the Bruce Peninsula, Warton Willie. As you know, February 2 is Groundhog Day, and nothing personal was intended by that, Speaker, of course.

Let's talk a little bit about André Marin. We all know André Marin.

Interjection: Great guy.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good guy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's the Ombudsman. Over there, they're saying “great guy,” “good guy.” Well, I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was there when the debate was going on.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, he should be addressing you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am addressing the Speaker. I was there when the debate was going on. Those folks over there wanted to get rid of André Marin so bad, they were salivating at the opportunity. I was in some of those meetings.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We reappointed him.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They reappointed him because there was only one reason: because we were not going to let them get away with it. We were not going to let them get away with it. They wanted to dump Marin, who has been an unbelievably dogged Ombudsman.

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Bradley said this about the Ombudsman's report. It's in here somewhere. Oh, yes.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Very thoughtful comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, it was thoughtful, all right, but it was somewhat incomplete.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd better get Jim. He's in the back.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, bring him in. I'd love to hear from him.

“Hon. James J. Bradley: I would first of all note that the Ombudsman has stated in this report that the regulation, as passed by the government, had a ‘laudable purpose.’ The regulation had the purpose of ‘protecting participants ... either from terrorist enemies or from protestors.’” Those are the words of the Ombudsman, Hansard, December 8, 2010. This was after his report.

Well, one thing about André Marin, he is extremely thorough. He's a fair man and he will say something nice about this government, even if it only uses up one paragraph on one page of a gazillion-page report here. It looks like about 120 pages. But let me read some of the other things that André Marin said in his report. You know the report I'm talking about: the report that was called Caught in the Act. That doesn't sound like the title would lead you to believe that he's going to be praising the government, does it, Mr. Speaker?

0940

Mr. Rob Leone: Can you judge a book by its cover, Yak?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pardon me? Oh, yeah.

“Regulation 233/10, passed”—this is his executive summary—“to enhance security during the G20 summit, should never have been enacted.” We all know the meaning of that word, “never,” eh? “It was likely unconstitutional. The effect of regulation 233/10, now expired, was to infringe on freedom of expression in ways that do not seem justifiable in a free and democratic society. Specifically, the passage of the regulation triggered the extravagant police authority found in the Public Works Protection Act, including the power to arbitrarily arrest and detain people and to engage in unreasonable searches and seizures. Even apart from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the legality of regulation 233/10 is doubtful. The Public Works Protection Act under which it was proclaimed authorizes regulations to be created to protect infrastructure, not to provide security to people during

events. Regulation 233/10 was therefore probably invalid for having exceeded the authority of the enactment under which it was passed. These problems should have been apparent—should have been apparent.

I asked you about the word “never”; you understand the meaning of “never.” Certainly you also understand the word “apparent.” It shouldn’t have been difficult to understand.

“And given the tremendous power regulation 233/10 conferred on the police, sober and considered reflection should have been given to whether it was appropriate to arm officers with such authority. This was not done. The decision of”—the decision of, I repeat, so we all know who’s at fault here—“the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to sponsor the regulation was unreasonable.” That is paragraph or section 1, or whatever we want to call it, of the executive summary. It goes on to well over 122, 123, and each and every one of them is a scathing indictment of this government.

Number 9: Well, it goes more about the history, which I’ve talked about.

Number 10: “In fact, regulation 233/10 was of doubtful constitutional validity. By creating security zones to bar entry and by authorizing arrest, it imposed definite limits on freedom of expression. It was therefore in prima facie violation of the charter as a matter of law, likely in ways that are not constitutionally justifiable. Regulation 233/10 worked to trip the powers of the Public Works Protection Act, thereby enabling the arrest and muting of protesters and others who had done nothing wrong. The impact of regulation 233/10 on freedom of expression was therefore almost certainly disproportionate.” We know the understanding and meaning of that word, too: “disproportionate.” “The government should have been wary of relying on a statute of doubtful constitutional validity in preference to dealing openly”—openly—“with the matter in the Legislature.”

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the members on the government side take their discussion outside? It’s getting a little loud over there. Thank you.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Not any louder than you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don’t need any additional comments. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, am I being too loud for them over there? I heard a comment that I’m being too loud.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I do believe you have the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thought I did. Are we putting a volume control in this place, now? Because you know, I try to speak softly and they don’t listen. I raise the volume and they don’t listen. I shout and they don’t listen. Maybe I will speak softly, because at least when I speak softly, tomorrow I’ll probably be able to speak. Today I might wear myself out.

But it gets so frustrating, Speaker. You know, you have to ask yourself: They hear what I’m saying, regardless of the volume, because I understand these little gad-

gets here. If I speak quietly, it sounds the same. They still hear me. If you’re watching on television, it’s technology. I could be just barely whispering, and on the television, we all sound the same. We all sound the same. But I’ll tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker: We might sound the same on the television, but we ain’t saying the same thing, whether we’re on the television or whether we’re in here.

I want to go back because I was—and you did the right thing, and I thank you for that, for quieting down that protest over there. But I want to go back to the final sentence of number 10 here in the executive summary: “The government should have been wary of relying on a statute of doubtful constitutional validity in preference”—which means, of course, that they would rather do it that way than do it this way—“to dealing openly with the matter in the Legislature.” Right here, that’s where we are.

Listen, they can try to talk their way out of this thing a thousand ways to Sunday. There is no getting out of this. Are they enacting the legislation that was asked for by the Ombudsman? Yes. Are they following the recommendations of the McMurtry report? Yes. Sorry, the McMurtry report asked for the legislation; the Ombudsman’s recommendations are a little different, but they are abiding by them. Why? Because they were caught in the act. But where’s the penalty? Who has paid the price? Who has paid the price?

And then they—oh, this is a good one here. The minister’s response, oh, that contrite minister—where was that? I’ve got it here somewhere, Speaker. Oh, yes. The minister’s response: On November 1, 2010, the minister responded, agreeing that, “The ministry could have, and should have, handled the enactment of regulation 233/10 better” and noting that in future it would “take greater care to ensure that the Ontario public is given more adequate notice of regulation changes of this nature.”

God, if I had a dollar for every criminal who went to jail and said he was sorry, eh? But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They went to jail.

No jail, no time in the penalty box, no firing. Why? Because that is the mindset of McGuinty: Hide it, run, go on vacation, hope it goes away, and invent something yourself. Invent something to change the channel: a new story, smokescreens, cover-ups—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Two comments: You might want to withdraw that one part of that statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. And the other one: I will remind members that when they come into this chamber, they are to acknowledge the Chair when they come and go. I saw three members in a row just walk directly to their seats—unacceptable. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, when our kids were young, and they were heading outside, and it was cold and windy, we always reminded them to cover up.

So what did go on over there? Why was this Legislature shut out? And by extension, the people of Ontario were shut out. It's the disrespect shown to the people of Ontario.

I'm not worried what they think of me over there, Speaker. I know my honourable colleagues are not worried what the Premier thinks of them personally. But they're here for a reason: to represent the good people of their ridings. So when you disrespect the members, you disrespect the people they represent. That's got to stop.

0950

But it's always looking for a scapegoat. The Premier was out looking for scapegoats yesterday. You know, Mr. Speaker, we are in one heck of a mess here in this province.

Mr. Rob Leone: It's terrible.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a terrible mess, and so much of it has been brought on by the economic decisions of this government.

So yesterday—the Premier is now blaming Ontario's mess on Alberta's success. It's always somebody else. When it was the G20, you know, “The police wanted this.” The police didn't ask for this specifically. They asked for some help, and this is what they gave them.

There's an editorial in the Ottawa Citizen. I have it in my notes here somewhere, but you know me; I'll never find it. But here is the McGuinty formula for righting the Ontario economy: “Could we just get Canada to devalue our dollar? And everything will be fine.” That's the economic policy of this Premier: Let's devalue the dollar, and everything will be fine. And he blames the devalued dollar on Alberta's success with oil extraction from the oil sands. This is how this mind thinks: “Let's damn Alberta and hope that Ontario prospers.”

Do you know that there are far more jobs being created in Ontario as a result of the economic boom in Alberta than there ever will be with his green energy jobs, ever? And I'll tell you one thing: Those jobs being created in Alberta? They don't cost us jobs, unlike high hydro rates that cost us jobs. And what drives up hydro rates more than expensive energy experiments?

So this is his answer now, because you see, he's so deeply aligned and there's been so much—oh, there have been some favours too. Let's face it, Mr. Speaker. “You scratch my back; I scratch yours. We have a fundraiser on such-and-such a day. Nice to see you there. Bring your chequebook”—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Only \$5,000.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —“\$5,000 a head. Come and see the Premier. He's going to pop up that day.” He's like Whac-A-Mole: There he is; there he's not. Today, the Premier shows his face, because there's money on the table. Boink—gone.

So there's a lot of money at stake. There's a lot of money at stake in his Green Energy Act and his exorbitant FIT program, so he wants to make sure his friends are happy. So what does he do? He condemns the province of Alberta.

You know, when things are going on, when things are booming in Alberta, the manufacturing sector of Ontario benefits. In fact, there was a small positive blip in manufacturing last month, and you know what it's due to? The Alberta economy. Their demands on our manufacturing have increased. But he is so myopic and so unbelievably—it's just this is his way that he thinks, and that's it. It doesn't matter what's right or wrong anymore. That he must condemn—he's, like, killing the goose that lays the golden eggs because it doesn't fit with his political philosophy. It doesn't match his plans for his legacy. This is what's going on: Let's dump on Alberta because we're hurting. Man, oh, man; it's so sad. It's so sad.

I'll tell you, the Ontario of old would never have stooped to that kind of rhetoric. It would have pulled itself up by the bootstraps. It would have enacted policies that bring this economy on the upswing. It would have done some things that make sure that this economy would continue to lead. It wouldn't go whining. You know what they called him in the Ottawa Citizen? “The whiner of Confederation.” That's what they called him, because now it's, “Oh, look at me in Ontario. It's not going good. It must be your fault.”

There are so many forces at play that have driven the Canadian dollar up. Number one is the weakness of the American dollar. Every dollar's tied—did you ever notice that every currency in the world is pegged relative to the American dollar? They're not pegged to one another. The value of every currency is pegged to the American dollar, so the weakness in the American dollar has caused our dollar to rise.

But you know what? I haven't seen them in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Manitoba, British Columbia or anywhere else crying about Alberta. But that's what we've sunk to here in Ontario under the leadership of this Premier, Dalton McGuinty. That's what we've sunk to. It's an embarrassment.

I know that I'm not speaking to the bill here, Speaker, and I know you're giving me that eye. You know me; I always get back to the bill.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He never cried about Alberta's success.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He criticized that budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. The member from Peterborough.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Peterborough, he was one of those guys at the table. I think I read his name in there. The member for Peterborough was at that cabinet meeting. He's sitting here in the House and he's worried about what I'm saying about Alberta? Your mouth was shut. His mouth was shut when they passed 233/10. He should have opened his mouth then.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We just want to make sure the record's right here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This will be my last warning to the member from Peterborough. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do have much to get in here yet and I'm run-

ning out of time. Unless there's unanimous consent to allow me to go on, my time is going to run out here shortly.

You know me. I don't take this place personally. I like the member for Peterborough, but if he's going to sit there and be critical, then I think it's time for him—we're going to have questions and comments after this. You know how this place works, folks. After I speak, we have questions and comments. The member for Peterborough will have two minutes to stand up and make questions and comments.

This is on Bill 34. This is about 233/10. I stand here and I admonish him and I ask him: Stand in your place and you tell me and you tell 100,000 people in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and you tell 13 million people in Ontario why you never said a word when you were there in the passing of that regulation. You want to stand up and talk about this bill? Say why you never said a word. There's your opportunity.

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is bullying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Orléans.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So, Mr. Speaker, let's get back to the meat of the matter. It will always be what we need to talk about when we're talking about this piece of legislation. Do you really think the backbench MPPs, those who weren't at the meeting as members of the Management Board of Cabinet—do you think the backbench members of the Liberal government would have agreed to this? I say no.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, he was there. Be careful.

They would not have because they would have looked at this and they would have asked themselves: "How can we, as members of this Legislature—we're the defenders of democracy. That's why we're here. We're here to speak for the people. How could we possibly support what they did?"

And I know that the members on this side of the House and my friends in the third party—by the way, there's nine more members of the third party. Is it nine new members of the third party? That should say something to the government on the other side. There are 16 new members in our party and there are nine new members in the third party.

But even in 2010, I am absolutely certain that the members of the third party would not have supported this. And I guarantee you that the members of this party would not have supported it. So the government the way it is, the way it whips its members, the way they're given their speaking notes and told what to say, the way they have no freedom—they walk into this House and it's like they slip the disk in the back and that's their comments for the day, because they're told exactly what to do by the cabinet.

1000

So it probably still would have passed. But you know what? No, it wouldn't have passed, because then the light of day would have been shone on it. Then the press—

even though the press likes those guys, they don't like what they did there—would have said no. The people who represent people in this province who don't sit here would have stood up and said no. The legal community would have said no.

I have a thing from a lawyer here—comments from a lawyer. Boy, she just ripped them on it. But I am running out of time. I can't believe how fast the time goes. Have you sped up the clock here? Anyway, members of the legal community would have gone AWOL. They would have gone—what's that word they use now with this YouTube stuff? Viral. It would have gone viral. It would not have passed.

So my question is, if you believe that something would not pass the judgment of the people in front of the door, why would you pass it behind the door? If it was wrong behind the door, it's wrong in front of the door, behind the door, beside the door, and it's wrong in the basement.

This never should have happened. It is an absolutely disgrace. The Ombudsman's report is an indictment of this government. Resignations should have taken place. It is not good enough to have a report months later that says we should have done better. People need to pay the price. The people of Ontario deserve better.

Now, I've got to calm down before I get a call from my cardiologist. You know, holy jumping. But, you know, it's hard. Listen, I look at the faces over there, and they're people I chat with at lunch and I meet them in the hall. They're good people. Why did you let yourselves get led down the garden path by your leadership? Why did you do it? I just don't understand it.

We can do better. We are better. We can do better; we must do better; we will do better. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to commend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He, for an hour, kept us all captivated. He started out by giving a historical analysis—which, I must admit, I was wondering why he was talking about the Second World War, about the sacrifices, about Hitler marching into Poland and everything else. But he drew it all together. He drew it all together when he started to talk about this legislation and why it's before this House. And he's absolutely right: It is before this House because the cabinet was culpable. The cabinet and the hangers-on who sat around that table could have stood up for the civil liberties of the people of Ontario, but did not. The cabinet and the hangers-on could have done the right thing, but they did not voice it. They kept it secret.

This member is absolutely right when he talks about the place for this to have been debated was in the Legislature. It was not, and the people of Ontario and the people in this Legislature had no idea what was going to happen. We know that hundreds and hundreds of people were arrested. We know that for almost all of them, the charges have been dismissed. We know what Roy McMurtry and what the Ombudsman had to say and every-

thing else. And you know, there it is: What he said was true.

I listened to him with great intent. I have to tell you that he gave a glimmer of hope to the people of Toronto as well when he talked about the amalgamation, when he talked about maybe one day giving us back our city, when he talked about maybe undoing what was wrong and getting East York back, as well as, I'm sure, York, Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke as well. So I thank him for his speech and for his contribution to this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's always very entertaining to listen to the member from Renfrew, and he sure wakes everybody up first thing in the morning.

But you know, Speaker, we know that the situation, the way it developed in that particular summer, leaves a lot to be desired. As a result of that, a number of reports were done and a number of recommendations were made by the Ombudsman and by Mr. McMurtry. It's as a result of that that changes are being made. We're taking an old law that was passed many, many years ago, before the Second World War, and we're modernizing it.

If you look at the law itself—it's amazing how he didn't really talk about the act that is being implemented here. We think it's extremely important, I'm sure they would agree as well, that our courtrooms, our court facilities and our nuclear facilities are as secure as they possibly can be: courtrooms because our whole democratic system of justice depends on that, and nuclear facilities obviously speak to the tremendous dangers that are there if they are not adequately protected.

You know, I listened with great interest and with some humour to what he had to say about a whole variety of things, and the one thing I always come back to is that each and every one of us is elected here from our own constituency, and we all bring something new to the table here. I listened with great interest to a lot of the maiden speeches this year and the enthusiasm that people have about what they want to bring to this place. They're going to succeed in some places, and they're not going to succeed in other places. But the reality is, we all bring the best of intentions and goodwill to this place to make sure that Ontario remains the great place that it is, with the great quality of life that we all enjoy.

Speaker, this bill is required. We need to modernize it, and it's all about making those facilities that we depend on more secure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments? Questions?

Mr. Rob Leone: I am pleased to stand here. I actually was watching the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke in my office, and I thought I can't, for the life of me, miss this. This is the greatest entertainment that I think Ontario has seen in a long, long time. He spoke passionately, he was animated, and he was right, I think, for the most part.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that I want to address the bill for a moment. I was a university professor during

the G20 summit, when that happened. Certainly, a lot of students had a lot of concerns about the security and the overuse of power, and they questioned the legitimacy. I was teaching a political science class on the legitimate use of power that governments have, and a lot of my students were talking about a very current event at the time. I was at McMaster teaching the course. The one thing that they struggled with was this question of legitimacy and legitimate use of power.

So I'm wondering if, in the two minutes that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has when he replies to our questions and comments, he could touch on some of the aspects of what he considers and how he would define the legitimate use of power, or the lack of the legitimacy in this case, on the part of that government. It's certainly something that a lot of students were concerned about at the time, and certainly a lot of citizens in the province of Ontario have a lot of concern for it as well. I hope the member, in his two minutes of closing, can touch on those points, because I think the legitimate use of power and the question of legitimacy on that is a very important question that hasn't been addressed yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his intervention this morning, his entertainment. Might I suggest that after his career in this place, he consider becoming a professional entertainer in the comedy realm? He's so funny. I would suggest the name of your facility could be Yak Yak's, and I'll invest in it. It will be tremendous.

But, aside from the humour, he brings up so many relevant points—the historical perspective. He talks about his family and how his wife is a saint and has to be to put up with him, and that's of course how we all feel.

One of the things that I picked up on in his comments the most was the what-if scenario that played out in Manitoba, I believe he had said. It conjures up some ideas about what if the Liberals, what if the government had done the right thing when it came to protecting citizens and protecting civil liberties? What if they had not gone behind closed doors, had not gone under a cloak of secrecy, to ensure that the laws were transparent, to ensure that those who were enforcing security understood their responsibilities, were not given a free rein to abuse, or actually understood the parameters of this bill?

I think there was a lot of miscommunication, and I think it may have been actually designed that way. It was chaotic, undoubtedly, and put a black mark and a stain on this city and this province. It is hopeful that this bill will remedy some of the effects.

I want to thank the member again for shining a whole lot of light on this subject, and I appreciate his comments this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for Beaches–East York, the Attorney General, the member for Cambridge

and the member for Essex for their comments. I noticed the member for Cambridge was asking me—he must think I'm the minister; he was asking me a question.

One thing I will say about the Ombudsman report—that he did question as to why this law would have been needed at all to protect the perimeter. The Public Works Protection Act, the original design of it and the reason, was to protect infrastructure. It wasn't about crowd control. It wasn't about protests. It was about protecting infrastructure under the possibility of attack. The Ombudsman questioned—and I won't find it here in my two minutes—the appropriateness of actually invoking a regulation under this act for this purpose. There's enough legislation in place today, without having invoked this act, to have given the authorities the necessary tools to work with. They may have had to enforce it in a more stringent way. But the fact of this five-metre—it was never really part of what the act was intended to do, and that was controlling the activities of your own citizens.

Again, the question is the judgment of the government, as to why they would have gone down that road when there were more appropriate statutes on the books—and still are. This hasn't changed anything. What the new bill has done is changed the parameters of which they can invoke this act. It's more restricted, but it doesn't change the fact that the government still has and had the power to control people.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Happy Pink Shirt Day. I see all of our colleagues are in the spirit today. It's great to be here. It's obviously a big bullying day, but it's really great to have a lot of Ontario principals in attendance here today in the gallery.

On behalf of all members of the assembly, I'd like to recognize the following members of the Ontario Principals' Council who are joining us today: of course, our principal in name and our Speaker, Mr. Levac, you were a principal; Vicki Shannon is here today; John Hamilton; Anne Presley; Richard Pincombe; Sharon Bowes; and Laura Hyde. They are here today to meet with members of the assembly as Ontario principals.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to welcome Michele Gallant, who's visiting here from Halifax today, and to also acknowledge all of the Ontario principals who are here today to meet with us to talk about the important issues in education.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'd like to welcome two young people to the Legislature today, both grade 12 students at Newmarket High School: Kelsey Chisamore Johnston and her friend Connor Buott. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome Gwen Chapman and the Canadian Black Caucus, who are here today for their annual Inspiring Youth political Black History Month event.

I wish to recognize some of the schools that are participating here at the Legislative Assembly today: C.E. Webster public school, Westview Centennial Secondary, Shiloh Christian Institute and the Crawford Adventist Academy.

The event is sponsored by Dr. Anthony Sterling, Scotiabank, Diners Corner, the ONE Initiative and Lawrence Kerr Photography. The event today is being held in room 230, but the students will be walking around the Legislative Assembly. I invite all members to say hello and visit room 230 to wish them all the best.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Donna and Jeremy Williams, who are here to monitor their son, Patrick, who is the page captain today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to welcome the students from Greenbank public school, grades 4, 5 and 6, and one of their teachers, Simone Clarkson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome the family of Ryan Haley, one of our pages: his mother, Joanne Haley, and some of his family. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to welcome a number of our guests who are members of the Ontario Principals' Council on this their Queen's Park day. Please join me in welcoming Ian McFarlane, Naeem Siddiq, Ken Arnott, Susan Ferguson, Bob Pratt and Peggy Sweeny. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to Ken Arnott, who is the principal at Northern Lights Public School in Aurora. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park the students and teachers from C.E. Webster elementary school, from the great riding of York South-Weston. They are here for the Inspiring Youth Black History Month event.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to introduce today Mr. Sean Hebel and his son Ryan, who is a student at Rockway Mennonite school. They're going to be joining us for a tour and lunch in this session.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to introduce Susan Ferguson, who is a principal at North Lambton Secondary School in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Welcome, Susan.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. For years, Premier, you have stood in this House and acknowledged that business tax cuts create jobs and are good for the economy, yet you've decided to hike taxes on the very people who Ontario depends on to get us out

of this recession: job creators. Premier, will you today do the right thing and vote with the Ontario PC caucus to stop your tax hike on job creators?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member is right: We have in fact cut corporate taxes quite dramatically. We have eliminated the capital tax—and they voted against all those tax cuts. We've taken the general corporate rate from 14% to 11.5% and the manufacturing process from 12% to 10%. And I remember the last Conservative budget here in Ontario, when the then Minister of Finance raised corporate taxes, Mr. Speaker.

We will look at this in the context of the entire budget and make the right choices that are balanced for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I find it amazing that the finance minister congratulates his government for the great job that they're doing when their own economist says that the deficit is going to \$30 billion by 2017-18.

You have spent months dodging even the most basic questions about business tax cuts, and in that time Ontario has lost far too many businesses that have moved out of our province to create jobs somewhere else. You cannot dodge much longer. Later today you will finally have to put your money, as it were, where your mouth is. Business leaders everywhere will be interested in seeing if you really will take the disastrous step of raising taxes on Ontario businesses.

Minister, will you actually be at the vote this afternoon? Will the Premier be there? Or are you both too embarrassed at your climb-down on business taxes to even show up?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to read from Hansard a quote from Janet Ecker, the then Conservative finance minister, dated June 17, 2002—and I know you were there, you were there, you were there, you were there and you were there. Here's what she said:

"In the meantime, because of our short-term fiscal situation, I will introduce legislation to delay ... the current planned reductions in personal and corporate income tax and the next step of the equity in education tax credit."

Mr. Speaker, we have to make a variety of choices to continue to build on this great province's future. It's about good education; it's about good health care; it's about a competitive tax system, which we have now, Mr. Speaker.

We welcome their bluster. We want to hear their motion. I know all the members will cast their votes, free to vote the way they choose. They will make those choices. We're proud of our members and proud of this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary

Mr. Peter Shurman: Great, great speech-making, Minister, but I could spend all day reminding you of your own commitment to cut taxes to create jobs: another commitment you are backtracking on. Since I don't have

all day, we will save discussing your complete reversal for the next election campaign, when, thanks to your tax hikes on job creators, we will no doubt still be in a jobs crisis.

Minister, you may not have any intention of running in the next election or you may. You might even want to be leader in the next election; we don't know what your Premier is going to do. But some of the folks on that side of the House are going to be there. How are they going to look their local business leaders in the face after you once again have turned your back on the small business community?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, they'll look at the small business community and say, "We cut your taxes, we made your environment more competitive, and my Conservative opponent voted against that." That's what they'll say.

They'll speak of integrity. They'll ask whether or not full-day learning should be a priority over the horse racing industry. They'll ask whether or not corporate tax cuts, when we now have a low and competitive rate, should have greater importance than—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Bring it down, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, they will ask why that party would see further corporate tax cuts as a priority over class size.

Those are important priorities. That's what the budget process is about. We're being clear with our priorities; they're saying corporate tax cuts are more important than education. We simply don't share that point of view.

1040

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier, Speaker: Premier, the NDP have been wrong on business tax cuts ever since there was a business to tax. While the Ontario PC caucus disagrees with the NDP on that, we at least respect the NDP for being principled.

That same thing cannot be said about your government. You and your government have a track record as reliable as the sunrise of breaking promises and backing away from your commitments.

Premier, you have a chance to break that pattern today. The question is, will you? Will you do what is right? Will you keep your commitment and vote with the Ontario PC caucus to reduce taxes on job creators?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member opposite thought that his own finance minister lacked principles when she made the choices she made—and that was the first budget after the Taxpayer Protection Act, which they put into place, and then the first thing they do is vote against their own legislation. I thought that was a principled stand in a difficult time.

I regret that you would accuse your colleagues in your own caucus, your former finance minister, your former

Premier of being unprincipled. I think they are principled people. I disagreed with them on many issues. It's a shame that they tie principle and integrity into this debate. Principle and integrity are very important in public policy and very important in politics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This finance minister talks about principle while this province sustains an unemployment rate of 8.1%.

You spent the last election campaign attacking the NDP as job killers and incompetent on the economy, but if you vote against the Ontario PC motion today, you yourself will kill more jobs and prove yourself incompetent on the economy. You will lose what little credibility you had left with business leaders in Ontario.

Perhaps it's time for a new finance minister, and maybe you can take the health minister with you. Go home. Go home with a shred of integrity intact. Vote for the Ontario PC motion today. I ask you again, will you commit to doing that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would like to quote from one Jim Flaherty in 2003, and I know members opposite have a lot of connections with Mr. Flaherty. Here's what he said in response to when the Tories delayed their planned tax cut: "The delay was created by a financial downturn related to ... 'extraordinary circumstances'...."

I think Mr. Flaherty has principle and integrity. I think your colleagues there have principle and integrity. I may not agree with them. I think principle and integrity are important to politics. And I can assure you, not only am I and the Minister of Health staying here, we're going to fight for a better Ontario for our kids and for the rest of the people of this great province.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Be seated.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: As far as I'm concerned and our party's concerned, they've just given a round of applause to a finance minister who has presided over a deficit that's larger than all other provinces' combined.

Speaker, Ontarians elected 16 new Ontario PC caucus members. Ontarians want us—want us—to fight for the jobs that are fleeing this province. We are going to spend each and every day of this Legislature doing exactly that.

If you hike taxes on job creators, Ontarians will not let you forget it. We on this side of the House will not let you forget it. Every time a business closes its doors, we will remind you. Every day that Ontario falls further behind the rest of Canada, we will remind you. And every day of the next election campaign, we will remind you.

It is not too late. Premier, finance minister: Will you do what's right? Will you vote with us today?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there is one government in Canada that has a larger deficit than Ontario. That's the federal Conservative government in Ottawa, and we worked with them to stimulate the economy.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The members opposite want to laugh. I don't think it's a laughing matter any more than I think that the tactics of the president of the PC Party with respect to Irwin Cotler are a laughing matter.

If you want to speak to integrity and principle in politics, I wonder, given what the Speaker said about those tactics—here is what the Speaker of the federal House said: "Attempting to sow confusion in the minds of voters as to whether or not their member was about to resign was a reprehensible tactic...."

Mr. Speaker, let's hear what they have to say about integrity in politics. Let's find out where they really stand on integrity.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last December, the Minister of Finance voted to defeat my private member's motion cancelling the corporate tax giveaways planned for this year and next. A motion on the same topic, as we've just heard, is scheduled for later today, but with the opposite intention in mind.

Can the Premier say how he plans to vote on this afternoon's motion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to be wanted, Speaker. It's good to be wanted. I get the sense, though, that we're getting conflicting advice on this particular issue.

We will do everything that we need to do to continue to be informed by the values that shape us as Ontarians. We want a strong economy, we want great schools, and we want great health care. We want our kids—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is unfair, Speaker. This is unfair.

We'll continue to bring a balanced and thoughtful approach to the choices that we make.

I know that we have—in 2008, we cut capital taxes. We raised the small business tax exemption. In 2009, we enhanced tax credits for businesses to hire apprentices and the like.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, during the last election campaign, New Democrats argued that Stephen-Harper-style corporate tax giveaways were not working in Ontario. The minister and the Premier said the sky was going to fall without them.

Is the Premier ready to admit that the Liberal election rhetoric about the importance of these corporate tax giveaways was wrong, or will he be voting with the Conservatives in favour of their motion this afternoon?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward to the debate to be held in this very chamber this afternoon, and we look forward to the results that come from that.

What I can say is that we have moved aggressively in the past with respect to improving the competitiveness of the tax environment here in Ontario for our businesses. As I was saying, in 2008, we cut the capital tax rate by 21%. That was retroactive to January 1. We subsequently eliminated all capital taxes. In 2008, we raised the small business tax exemption 25%. In 2009, we enhanced tax credits for businesses that hire apprentices. Also in 2009, we extended the Ontario innovation tax credit. In 2010, we adopted the HST. In 2010, we cut the corporate income tax rate from 14% to 12%. So I think we have done a great deal here on this side of the House to ensure we have a competitive tax environment in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has spoken previously about difficult choices, but in this situation, I think it's pretty much a no-brainer, and it really shows how out of touch the government is with the challenges that are facing everyday families.

But you know what? This is only one example. Beginning in 2015, this government is going to start allowing Ontario's richest corporations to write off expenses like entertainment, like travel, like gasoline. This is yet another drain on a treasury that simply cannot afford it.

Does the Premier plan to defend this giveaway as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, they can already do those things.

I'd also remind my colleague, as she tries to pigeon-hole various political leaders, to take a look at what President Obama just did. He made a commitment to further cut their corporate taxes, and I will say that even if those commitments are ultimately honoured by the various Houses down there through their process, our taxes will still be more competitive.

Speaker, I remind my honourable colleague of something I said just earlier today, informed in part by advice that she offered during the course of the campaign. At a time when we've got to make important choices and difficult choices, I think we've got to look at the corporate tax measures that are available through boxes at entertainment events and sporting events. I think it's something we've got to take a very close look at.

1050

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Health. The minister has insisted that she has had no power to look into Ornge's strange financial schemes, but schedule K of the performance agreement between the province and Ornge makes it clear that Ornge had to submit a budget to the ministry every July, an audited statement every July and quarterly expenditure

reports. Did none of these many reports twig the minister that something might be amiss?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. As the member opposite well knows, there have been serious irregularities at Ornge. That is why we have taken the action we have to fix the problems that exist now and to ensure that these problems do not happen again.

I can assure the member opposite that my ministry officials exercised as much power as they had to try to get answers from Ornge on a range of issues. I can tell you also that those requests for information were not met with the kind of collaboration and respect that one would expect from a partner delivering care.

It was not just the ministry that had trouble accessing information. The Auditor General of Ontario was unable to get the information he needed. That is why we have taken the action we have, and that is why we are moving forward with new leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It begs the question, who the heck is running the ship in Ontario with that kind of response?

In December 2010, New Democrat MPPs raised issues about Ornge in committee. The minister said she would get to the bottom of it. By December 2011, she should have seen four quarterly reports, an annual report and an audited statement. Did none of these many reports lead the minister to believe that something might be wrong at Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer to that is yes, and that is why we have taken the action we have. We have gone through the appropriate steps. We eventually got to the point where we had to take what is almost unprecedented action. We sent in a forensic audit team. We fired the CEO and replaced the CEO with a new interim CEO. We fired the board and have replaced them with a very highly competent board.

We are developing a new performance agreement that will have embedded in it the measures that I think the people of this province expect us to have in terms of oversight at Ornge. I will be introducing legislation shortly that will bring the force of law to those elements of the performance agreement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Another schedule to the agreement, which—she obviously failed in the first place in terms of preparation of the original one. But in that original one, it states that the ministry had a right to enter Ornge's offices to view and copy financial records, invoices and documents and to conduct an audit.

In 2010, the minister insisted she was going to get to the bottom and get answers to the questions about Ornge. Months later—months later—when she was asked about Ornge in this House, she made the same reply and promises again: that she would get to the bottom of it.

Can the minister explain how it is that she was stonewalled for over a year, even though she had the power to

walk into Ornge offices, order an audit and look at any financial documentation she wanted to?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The people of this province expect me to fix the problems as we found them. We found serious problems at Ornge. That is why we have taken the quite extraordinary actions that we have taken.

We are moving forward with a new performance agreement because the old one simply does not reflect the degree of transparency and accountability that I and my government feel is appropriate. We are moving forward with the new board. I told the new board to focus, first, on patient safety. That was the most important thing. The second most important thing was to address the financial irregularities, and that work is under way right now.

The other piece that the new board is responsible for is for winding down all the for-profit entities that were created under the previous management that clearly was not up to the job.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. The minister boasts of a new leadership team at Ornge, and yet the two individuals who were responsible for implementing the very policies that undermined patient care at Ornge are still there. Yesterday, I asked the minister how these two have managed to negotiate their immunity. Now that she's had an opportunity to look into this, I wonder if the minister could enlighten us as to how and why Mr. Rick Potter and Mr. Steve Farquhar are still there?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the responsibility that I take very, very seriously is to put in place a new board of directors who are exercising the authority that they have been entrusted with in a very energetic and deliberate way.

The new chair of the board is Ian Delaney, a former chair of Sherritt International, a highly respected Canadian and international business person. Charles Harnick, a former member of this Legislature, is on the board. Patricia Lang, the former president of Confederation College; Dr. Barry McLellan, the CEO at Sunnybrook Hospital—impeccable credentials. Maneesh Mehta, the co-founder of the Black Box Institute, a member of the local health integration network, is on this board; Patrice Merrin; Patricia Volker—these are very highly skilled individuals who have volunteered to come to the aid—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, perhaps we can help the minister. A background check of the new board reveals some interesting relationships. I have a media release dated May 26, 2010, announcing a \$250,000 donation to Confederation College by none other than Dr. Chris Mazza. The cheque was accepted by Patricia Lang, who was then president of Confederation College and is now one of the new board members. And no doubt, it's just a coincidence that Mr. Rick Potter happened to be employed by Confederation College.

Could it be possible that Mr. Potter still has his job because of those relationships?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite has impugned the integrity of some very impressive people. The reputation of the board of directors of Ornge should not be questioned by the member opposite. If he wants to throw mud, he can throw it in my direction. Do not throw it at the people who have come to get Ornge back on track. Do not throw mud at the front-line staff who are working so hard to deliver air service in this province. Shame on the member opposite.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. I appreciate the fact that you have come to order as quickly as I asked. I appreciate that. I would also appreciate not having to have me stand in the first place. That would be very helpful. It is a difficult situation, and I do want to hear everyone, so it's fair that everyone be heard. So I'd ask again, don't make me respond, by allowing the questions and answers to be given. Thank you so much.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: Will the minister resign?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows that's not a point of order, and it has not been helpful right when we were complimenting you for not inflaming the situation. I would ask that the minister finish her answer—thank you.

New question.

1100

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The minister recently wrote a letter to Jim Flaherty, stating: "It is not clear that taxpayers should be subsidizing certain business expenses ... such as private boxes and corporate seats at sporting events."

But the HST agreement the minister signed with Ottawa will allow large corporations to get a sales tax rebate on those very expenses in the coming years. How come the minister wasn't concerned about these reckless giveaways when he signed the HST agreement in the first place?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is probably aware that he's speaking about two different things. He's talking about deductions for income tax purposes versus input tax credits. The input tax credits have been shown to increase business productivity, to help manage the cost of doing business in this great province.

I did write Mr. Flaherty—I think we do share some common ground on these kinds of issues. I point out to him that that is one item I raised with Mr. Flaherty: the number of things that, co-operating with the federal government, we can do to help improve the fiscal situation both for Canada and for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Here's what Ontario's finance minister said when New Democrats proposed an end to

the HST write-off on box seats during the election campaign, and I'm quoting here from the Toronto Star of September 13, 2011: "It represents killing a huge job creation initiative."

Does that remain the minister's position? And if not, why is the province proceeding with plans to let corporations get a sales tax rebate on box seats and expensive restaurants?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, again I want to point out to the member opposite that in fact there are two spots where this happens. One is on income tax and one will be, I think six years from now, on HST input tax credits. So I think we share some common ground on these issues. I look forward to the points of view put forward by the third party and I welcome the points of view put forward by the official opposition.

We'll continue to work to keep Ontario's tax system fair as we lay out a budget plan that will protect the best education system and best health care system in the world.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as you know, today is Pink Shirt Day. Pink Shirt Day began in Nova Scotia when a grade 9 boy wore a pink shirt to school and he was mercilessly bullied by schoolmates for looking gay.

Minister, as we all know, words can hurt. Two thirds of kids who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender feel unsafe at school. Almost three quarters of kids report hearing homosexual slurs at schools every day.

Bullying in our schools is a serious problem with devastating results. I know this is an issue that is important to all members in the House. Minister, can you please tell this House what the government is doing to combat this awful problem?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for his leadership, and I want to acknowledge the leadership right around the House today. I look across and I see more than 30 pink shirts and pink outfits today, and I think that exemplifies the root of what Pink Shirt Day is about.

Pink Shirt Day is about a community coming together to fight against bigotry and racism and homophobia, to say that we will fight that in a collective effort together. I certainly hope—when I look around the Legislature today, I can feel comfort that this Legislature will come together on this very important issue and continue to stand up for Ontario's kids in all their great diversities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we are proud of all students who take a stand and work hard to end bullying in our schools.

In order to combat bullying in schools across this province, we need to change the culture in all of our schools. We need to make bullying socially unacceptable in our schools. There have recently been very tragic

incidents of young people taking their lives because of the fact that they were bullied in schools, and we have spoken about that in this Legislature.

I know that the Minister of Education agrees that this is completely unacceptable. Will the minister tell this House about legislation that she has introduced in order to stop bullying in our schools?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Again, today we take a step to show that we all, across this Legislature, care about this very important issue.

There's another opportunity coming ahead. Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, if passed, would create legal obligations for boards to address bullying prevention and early intervention, progressive discipline, and equity and inclusive education. It's an opportunity for us to tell all kids in Ontario that not only will it get better, but we will make it better.

I look forward to all of those in this Legislature coming together to have an opportunity to pass the Accepting Schools Act, which speaks so clearly to the fact that we want every student in every school in every part of this province to be safe and accepted every day when they come into their school and their classrooms. Together, we can make that a reality.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health.

Every flight of every air ambulance service in Canada and in the United States can be tracked on several websites across the continent. Can the minister tell us why Ornge has made the decision to block Ornge's Ontario air ambulance flights from these public tracking systems? Minister, what is Ornge trying to hide?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for the question. What I can tell you is that we have very strong, new leadership in place that is focused on three particular issues.

They are focused on patient safety, and they have taken steps to ensure that the patients who are transported by Ornge get the care they need when they need it.

They are focused on the financial situation at Ornge. There have been financial irregularities identified, and they are very focused on addressing those issues.

We are focused on bringing much more transparency and accountability to the work that goes on at Ornge.

We're also working on winding down the for-profits, and we are focused completely on providing care to the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we now know that the Thunder Bay helicopters have been out of service for a total of 46,716 minutes so far this year. That equals 32 days with no pilot or paramedic available. And because Ornge is not willing to station a full complement of staff in Sioux Lookout, we have discovered that they are using air ambulances hidden from tracking systems to shuttle paramedics to and from Thunder Bay.

Minister, we're not getting any answers. You seem to be doing this on the fly, but now people's lives are at stake. Will you please step down?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be very happy to share with this House some information about Ornge that is actually based in fact.

Yesterday, Ornge pilots flew for 94 hours; they covered over 20,000 statute miles. They arrived on the scene in two situations; they transferred 57 patients. Between November and January, they travelled more than 1.3 million statute miles.

The people at Ornge are doing their job. I have every confidence in the new leadership. Were there problems at Ornge? Absolutely. Are they being addressed? Absolutely. Are we seeing progress? Yes. Are the front-line staff seeing the difference that the new management is bringing? Yes.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Education: What does the minister suggest members of this House tell parents who come to them with the information that their child care centre is being closed because of the poor implementation of all-day kindergarten?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to stand and talk about the single largest investment that we're making in early learning. All-day kindergarten, when fully invested, will be \$1.5 billion. Each year, we respond to families who ask us, "When can my child be in all-day kindergarten?"

1110

Despite challenging fiscal times, we've made a determination that we will move forward with all-day kindergarten because it is in the best interest of all of our children to gain that early learning. I can tell you that I've had a chance to speak to the member opposite about the work that we're doing to make sure that we modernize and transform child care to reflect a new reality that our four and five-year-olds will be in school. They will no longer be in child care.

So I invite the member to bring forward solutions to work with those families, as I am, and to find a new pathway forward for child care in Ontario, one that puts our earliest learners first and continues to invest in them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to tell you, I don't think parents are going to warm to that answer. Hundreds—hundreds—of child care centres in communities across Ontario have closed since 2007. Hundreds more are at risk of closing as four- and five-year-olds transition into full-day kindergarten. The minister has made it clear that investments in early learning are a priority and that full-day kindergarten will not be cut. So be it. Not a bad idea. Will she also assure parents of younger children that their child care centres will be there for them?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Speaker, I think it's important, as we talk about the investments that this govern-

ment has made to improve the lives of children, that we focus on the fact that our government, since 2003, has increased child care funding from \$532 million to \$869 million, a 63% increase. When the federal Conservative government stepped away from child care, we stepped forward and we invested an additional \$63.5 million. So I can tell you, we have been focused on child care. We have been focused on looking for solutions, and we invite all members of this House to work with our government and with families in this province to acknowledge what will be a new reality come 2014.

Four- and five-year-olds will be in all-day kindergarten. That's where they should be. Will we continue to support child care in this province? Will we continue to invest in it? Of course we could. I've invited the member opposite to give me his advice. I look forward to that advice.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, there are two big challenges that we need to face right now in health care. The first challenge is fiscal: Ontario has a \$16-billion budget shortfall and health care is 42% of the budget.

The second challenge is demographic. The first of the baby boom generation turned 65 last year. Our generation will put ever-increasing pressure on health care. The status quo will lead to a health care system that simply can't meet patient needs. Minister, how will Ontario address this challenge facing health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for this very thoughtful, astute question.

I tell you, the solution to the challenges that he has identified are vital to the future health of this province and of health care in Ontario. We have launched an action plan that builds on the progress that we have made over the past eight years. It focuses on improving the quality of patient care. It focuses on improving access, particularly primary care. It focuses on looking forward so that we shift spending from those investments that do not improve patient outcomes to those things that do. We are committed to maintaining our investment in health care, but the fiscal circumstances demand that we get smarter about how we spend our health care dollars—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, despite the challenging economic times, Ontario must deliver, protect and strengthen the health care services that we all need. Our parents' and grandparents' generations showed the courage and the compassion to create our uniquely Canadian universal health care system.

In neighbourhoods like Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville in Mississauga, we need more options for seniors to get the care they need outside hospitals and long-term care. Every new dollar into the system must first, last and always improve the health of patients.

Minister, what specific measures will Ontario take to achieve this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are shifting our focus to the patient by taking several steps that make our system much more patient-focused and patient-friendly than it currently is. We will create faster access to primary health care by expanding after-hours care. That will have a corresponding decrease in the pressure on our emergency departments. Bringing doctors, primary care physicians, into local planning will expand access again. Resources will be shifted into the community because we know we can provide excellent care at home, again taking pressure off our hospitals and off our long-term-care homes.

By moving routine procedures from hospitals into stand-alone, not-for-profit clinics, we can again take pressure off hospitals and provide excellent care and excellent value for the taxpayer dollars—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, for weeks, questions have been swirling around regarding the Ornge organization's neglect and mismanagement. Speaker, I have documents here from 2009 from your MPP from Durham inquiring about procurement practices at Ornge, specifically with regard to aircraft and medically designed interiors.

In a letter from 2009, the Minister of Health thanked Mr. Leal for his comments and brushed off his inquiry. Mr. Speaker, it is becoming crystal clear every day that this government was advised of growing problems and yet has failed to act. Minister, members of your own caucus were warning you of these problems from back in 2009. You knew there were business problems. You knew there were procurement problems. You knew there were patient service problems. You knew that Ornge was a rogue organization from the start.

Minister, will you accept responsibility and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I can tell you, Speaker, that we are moving forward with changes in governance to Ornge that will ensure the patients of this province get access to the highest quality air transportation and land ambulance transportation. The people of this province deserve and expect the very best, and that is why we are making the changes we have done.

As I have said, Speaker, I will shortly be introducing legislation that will have several components to it. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of that. It will entrench in law that the ministry has a full ability to review the finances of Ornge. It will bring a patient advocate to Ornge the way our hospitals do. It will require Ornge to have quality improvement plans, just as we have done in hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, they're closing the barn door after the horses are gone. Mr. Speaker, in the letter I have from the member from Peterborough, the former president of Ornge stated, "We have developed a rigorous procurement process that is used to acquire high-quality goods and services at a cost-effective price." This could only be true if "rigorous process" meant their pockets were being lined with taxpayers' money under your watch.

Minister, rather than take any meaningful action to investigate these problems, you've simply looked the other way. Mr. Speaker, where there's smoke, there's fire, and there seems to be a lot of smoke coming from this minister.

So I'm asking you today, Minister, with the Premier listening: You're responsible; will you take responsibility and resign your job today? Hand in the keys.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I take my instructions from the people of this province, and what they're telling me is that they want to know that when they need air ambulance care, or when someone they love does, that that service is there for them. They also want to know that their tax dollars are being spent in the most effective manner possible. That is why I have taken the steps I have done that have involved bringing in a forensic audit team and ultimately referring the matter to the Ontario Provincial Police.

Now, I might say that the member opposite might not think that those are important and decisive steps, but I can tell you, the people of Ontario respect the changes that are happening at Ornge. They welcome the changes in Ontario, Speaker, and I continue to drive those changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Jordan Fram and Jason Chenier died on the evening of June 8, 2011, when an uncontrolled torrent of wet ore material burst out of the number 7 ore pass at Vale Inco's Stobie mine and buried them. Steelworkers Local 6500 members had complained for weeks about problems in the number 7 ore pass, but the issues were not adequately addressed by management.

1120

Will the Premier direct the Minister of Labour to conduct a full and public investigation into the causes of these fatalities so that tragedies like this one won't happen again to any family?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. I know the Minister of Labour will want to respond in the supplemental, but obviously, I think, we offer our sympathies to the Chenier family and to the

Fram family. We know that one workplace death is one death too many, and we have to ensure that we do everything within our power to ensure our workplace is safe.

We know that Vale has done an investigation and offered some recommendations. Today, we hear that the United Steelworkers have done an investigation and offered recommendations. We know that the Ministry of Labour is undergoing an investigation at this point in time.

At the end of the day, we have to ensure we have the safest possible workplaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The question is back to the Premier. We wanted to know if a full public investigation was going to take place. We got no answer.

Now, miners, mining companies and the Ministry of Labour—everybody involved with health and safety—have long recognized that issues associated with ore passes are some of the most hazardous conditions in underground mining, which is already a dangerous environment. An ore pass, Premier, is what allows miners to move the ore from the upper level of the mine to the bottom so it can be brought back to surface.

The tragedy of those two deaths is that the mining companies know how to prevent those incidents from becoming accidents; it's a matter of taking action. So will the Premier, on behalf of Jordan Fram's mother and sister, who are here with us today; on behalf of Jason Chenier's widow and family, ask the Attorney General and his assistant deputy Attorney General responsible for criminal law to lay charges under the Westray provisions of the Criminal Code?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I too would like to offer my condolences to the families and their co-workers who were killed in this tragic incident. No one in our province should be able to go to work unsure that they will return safely at the end of the day. That's why my ministry is committed to improving health and safety in Ontario mines and workplaces across Ontario.

The Ministry of Labour's investigation is ongoing. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specifics of this case. What I can say is that our investigators have been working on this case since day one, and their investigation will be thorough and comprehensive. It's what the family members of the deceased would want and expect, and that's what we are going to do.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, in 2008, your ministry launched the Justice on Target program, aimed at reducing delays in the criminal justice system. I understand that every year, for nearly 20 years, the number of appearances it took to resolve a criminal case went up. By 2008, the number of court appearances and the duration it took to resolve a criminal matter had increased considerably. I understand that every criminal court of the Ontario justice system is

identifying, implementing and sustaining initiatives to tackle this delay.

Minister, after four years of work, can you tell this House what progress has been made with the Justice on Target system to reduce the trend of criminal court—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. First of all, I thank the member for the question. Yes, the strategy is working, and as a result of the action we took and my predecessor took some four years ago, we have reversed the trend and the number of court appearances are indeed down. We've set aggressive goals, and those goals inspired aggressive innovation in each and every courthouse. In fact, the number of appearances to resolve a criminal case is almost 25% lower than it would have been if we had taken no action at all.

Two thirds of Ontario's criminal courts have reduced the average number of appearances since the strategy has come into effect, and 16 sites—16 courts—have achieved double-digit reductions.

There have been nearly half a million fewer court appearances since JOT began, but it requires the collaboration of everyone that's involved in the court system, from the judges to the crown attorneys to the defence counsel and, indeed, to all the other support workers.

It is working. There's more work to be done, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. Good to hear that we're making progress.

Many people at the local level are involved in working towards local targets, and they should be commended. My constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River are interested in what this means for them on the ground at the local level and at their local courthouses.

I understand that for the first time ever, criminal court statistics dating back to 2000 are made publicly available so that Ontarians can follow the progress of courts in their local community towards reaching their targets.

Minister, can you provide me with some examples as to how this benefits everyday Ontarians accessing our justice system?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank you for the supplementary as well.

I can highlight an example from a courthouse where people who come to the court for the first time and have questions are handed a sheet as to what actions they should take. This didn't always happen before that.

Last week, I attended the Etobicoke courthouse, in which over 22,000 charges are being dealt with on an annual basis right here in Toronto. I saw the JOT team in action, and I can tell you that those folks are doing some great work.

I'm very proud of JOT. There's still a lot of work to be done. We can do better. The goals that were set were more aggressive than what we have achieved so far.

But I can also tell you that it requires the collaboration of everyone involved in the court system. We've had

great co-operation from the judges, from the JPs, from the crown prosecutors as well as the defence bar.

Speaker, we're heading the right way. The number of appearances in the criminal cases in Ontario is going down, and that's exactly what JOT had in mind when it started.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Health. Back in 2009, with the co-operation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, 30 interim long-term-care beds were opened at the Marguerite Centre in Pembroke. This was done to alleviate the pressure on the Pembroke Regional Hospital with the number of alternative-level-of-care beds. The plan worked. The hospital achieved its goal, and patients became residents at the Marguerite Centre.

Without warning, in December, you decided to close those 30 beds. This has been a great cause of concern in my community. My question is twofold: With already-long waiting lists for LTC beds, why would you close these interim beds? And will that not just ensure that the Pembroke Regional Hospital will again be converting expensive acute care beds to alternative-level-of-care beds?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for this question. This is an important question because it demonstrates the change that is happening in the way we care for our elderly people.

These interim beds were created. They were called interim beds because it was always intended to be a short-term situation as we built community capacity to be able to care for people in their own homes whenever possible.

So these are interim beds. They will be closing gradually. Everyone who is a resident there now will be placed in the long-term-care home of their choice. We are doing this in a thoughtful way. At the same time, we are ramping up the services that will permit people to have the supports they need to stay home as long as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, the issue in the community is that there continues to be a lack of placements available. There's a lack of capacity in long-term care for these residents.

Would it not make sense to keep these beds open until the numbers on the waiting list drop? We all know that the most expensive and inappropriate care is the care they'll be getting if they end up in an ALC bed in a hospital.

My first request is that you suspend this plan until such time as a better alternative solution can be found. Failing that, can you give the people of Pembroke, and particularly the current residents of Marguerite Centre and their families, the assurance that not a single one of them will be moved out without being transferred to the long-term-care home of their choice?

1130

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can't give the member opposite the assurance that all current residents will be moved to a long-term-care home of their choice. This is a good example of a community working together. The Champlain LHIN has been working with partners in Pembroke, including Marianhill, Pembroke Regional Hospital and the Champlain CCAC to ensure a smooth transition for the very people that the member opposite is speaking on behalf of.

So I look forward to the completion of this transition, and I very much look forward to the doubling in funding that will be focused on the assess-and-restore beds to get people back home, because you know what? That's where people want to be, if at all possible.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. Today is repetitive strain injury awareness day, and this morning there are injured workers at Queen's Park looking to this government for action. RSIs or musculoskeletal disorders, MSDs, account for 50% of all lost-time days and are the most common lost-time claim under the WSIB. The cost to our health care system is staggering, and so are the personal costs. Will the minister listen to these workers and finally implement the needed ergonomic regulations?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank the member for the question. Over the last few months, as a relatively new Minister of Labour, I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to hear from injured workers first-hand, and I was proud to speak with them and to share with them our commitment to treating injured workers with dignity and respect. In fact, we spoke about the fact that we've increased injured workers' benefits every year from 2007 to 2012, and on January 1, 2011, we increased benefits again. On January 1, 2012, benefits will increase again by 0.5%. That's a total increase of 9% since mid-2007.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is conducting comprehensive funding reviews to ensure that the board has long-term financial stability, and we've asked that the review include options for new benefit indexation to replace the modified Friedland formula and to support fairness for injured workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister's concerns are commendable, but what Ontario workers need is better mandatory protection. For years, this government has hoped that voluntary measures and awareness would be enough to reverse the epidemic of RSIs. Well, today, all these workers are here to tell you that it is not. They need strong regulations. I ask the minister again: Will she commit to bringing forward these essential changes today?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, the health and the safety of Ontario workers is a top priority of this government, and we continue to work with the WSIB to make

significant improvements that benefit both the workers and the employers. The WSIB has committed to the introduction of a new workplace integration program, which hired 200 new staff and repatriated thousands of cases formerly managed by private sector providers, with extremely positive outcomes in 2011. The re-employment has increased under the new program to 74% from 35% under the old program. The average length of return-to-work plans is now five months versus 19 months under the old program.

Clearly, one injury is one too many. We want to make sure that people get back to work, that we help injured workers, that we make sure there are fewer injuries in the future. Prevention is part of our mandate, and the new prevention officer, the chief prevention officer, will make that a mandate going forward.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Protecting the quality of the air we breathe is a fundamental concern for all Ontarians. Smog, airborne toxins and other forms of outdoor air pollution are affecting the health of thousands of individuals every year.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please share with us what our government is doing to help improve air quality for all Ontario residents?

Hon. James J. Bradley: An excellent question, I can tell the member. We're replacing dirty coal-fired plants with cleaner, more renewable energy in the province. In fact, Ontario's phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation by the end of 2014 is the single largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in all of Canada.

Since 2005, replacing coal with clean energy has resulted in \$4.4 billion in avoided health care and environmental costs, 668 fewer premature deaths per year and 928 fewer hospital admissions per year.

In 2005, our government introduced the local air quality regulation known as regulation 419, which sets standards for substances that have human health or environmental impacts.

Since 2005, 68 new or updated air standards have been introduced for substances which are linked to health effects—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Speaker. I know my constituents, along with the rest of Ontario, will be pleased to hear the good work our government is doing to reduce air pollution.

Another initiative our government has been steadily improving is Ontario's Drive Clean program. Drive Clean plays an important role in protecting the quality of the air we breathe. Vehicles are a serious polluter, creating smog-causing emissions that can have a significant impact on the health of Ontarians.

Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment explain the recent improvements our government has made to the Drive Clean program?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Since the beginning of the program, Drive Clean has reduced smog-causing pollutants by 260,000 tonnes.

But even the most sophisticated equipment can still become a serious polluter—any of these vehicles could—if their emission systems are not properly maintained. That is why, in January of this year, our government phased in a more accurate testing technology that is expected to reduce emissions from on-road vehicles by an additional 20% over what can be achieved under the current test.

It's also important to note that there will be no additional costs to consumers. The testing fee will remain the same. All vehicles—cars, trucks and buses—less than seven years old no longer need to be tested when the registration is renewed. All vehicles—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, in my question to the Minister of Health, I misspoke by referring in my supplementary to the riding—I should have said Peterborough and I said Durham. I'd like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the point of order, the member does have a point of order, and he is allowed to correct his own record. I thank you for that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am thrilled to have two former staffers here, one from the official opposition and one from the government; two people who worked really hard behind the scenes here. One was my former chief of staff; the other was an aide to former member Michael Bryant when he was House leader. I'd like to welcome to this place, back again on that side, Rod Elliott and Megan Boyle, and they have a friend here whose name is—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Simon. Simon is here. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do welcome our guests.

Mr. John O'Toole: Today I had the privilege of meeting one of my constituents—I expect him to be here shortly. The constituent is Jack Fonseca, who is from Campaign Life, talking to me on a number of issues. I highly respect the work they do, and I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Yes, member from—

Ms. Soo Wong: Scarborough–Agincourt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I would like to recognize two recent accomplishments at Agincourt Collegiate Institute, a high school in my riding. Joining us today is the principal of the school, Louie Papathanasakis. Last night, Mr. Papathanasakis was honoured as one of Canada's outstanding principals in 2012 by the Learning Partnership. Great principals are the foundation to great schools, and they devote themselves to the success of their students. One of the former students of Mr. Papathanasakis, Gabriel Lee, stated that one of the reasons he went into teaching was because of "who Louie was and how he conducted himself."

Also here today are two Agincourt students, Matthew Ho and Assad Muhammad, as well as their family members: Sabana Perveen, Sobia Zulfi, David Ho and Sue Quan.

You may recognize Matthew's and Assad's names. This past month, they launched a Lego-man wielding the Canadian flag into near space. Videos and photos of the Lego-man's journey have gone viral on the Internet. Stories about the experiment have received international attention—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I welcome our guests. I would also remind all of our members that this is a way of introducing people and possibly just saying what they do. After that, it does not become a statement. I would appreciate that very much.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You didn't like my five-minute statement on staffers?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, member.

Further introductions? There being no further introductions, I would like to bring to your attention that we have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a member of the National Assembly of Cuba, Mr. Agustin Lage Davila. He is accompanied by the Consul General of Cuba at Toronto, Mr. Jorge Soberon. We welcome them to the House today. Mucho gusto.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The issue of industrial wind turbines and the failed Green Energy Act is something that is of great concern to my constituents. To date, nearly 100 municipalities have passed resolutions calling for a moratorium on further turbine development. The most recent of these is, of course, the municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc in my riding.

I proudly support these local municipalities, but by ignoring these concerns, the McGuinty Liberals has sent the message that rural Ontario doesn't matter. Speaker,

the people of Ontario have been silenced for long enough, and that is why, on March 12 at 7 p.m., at Amy's Place restaurant in Strathroy, I will be hosting a public wind turbine and green energy town hall meeting.

To date, several MPPs, including our PC energy critic, Vic Fedeli, and MPPs Bailey, Thompson and Nicholls, have confirmed their attendance. I have also extended an invitation to the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Chris Bentley, who I hope will attend.

I'm happy to invite members of the public to attend this important meeting and look forward to hearing from our communities across Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

NEW CHOICES PROGRAM

Miss Monique Taylor: The New Choices program provides a valuable service to the Hamilton community. It's a program that offers new mothers with substance use concerns a full range of services in one location. It allows them to focus on developing the ability to combat addiction while enhancing their parenting skills, maintain or regain custody of their children and return to work or school.

The program focuses on mothers who want a chance to change the paths of their lives that have led them astray. They want to have the ability to be good parents, but they simply don't have the tools.

The New Choices program has been running for 14 years without secured funding, and it's now at risk. It's the kind of program that allows a family a better way to a healthy future, and in doing so, saves millions of dollars from other areas of health care and social services systems.

Allow me to quote one of the New Choice clients: "As a result of attending the New Choices program, I am now almost four years free and clean from a decade-long addiction to crack cocaine and other drugs. Children's aid closed my family's file over two years ago, and in 2010, I earned my diploma with honours at the top of my class for addictions and community services." This is just one of the many successful stories from the New Choices program.

I stand here today realizing the financial insecurities that we are facing, so I ask this government to please recognize the social and financial benefits that the New Choices program brings to my community.

AGINCOURT COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Ms. Soo Wong: I apologize to the House for my enthusiasm earlier about the visitors.

Anyway, it's a great pleasure to introduce my colleagues and my friends who are here from Scarborough–Agincourt. First, I want to recognize Mr. Louie Papathanasakis, who has been recognized as one of 40 new outstanding principals of 2012. He's a great principal for Agincourt Collegiate Institute, so thank you, Louie.

The other two guests here are two Agincourt Collegiate students: Matthew Ho and Assad Muhammad.

The parents are finally here: Sabana Perveen, as well as Sobia Zulfi, David Ho and Sue Quan. These two young men have shown us what entrepreneurship as well as leadership is all about, in terms of science and technology. I want to welcome them as well as acknowledge their accomplishments.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rod Jackson: I had the pleasure to attend the Canadian International AutoShow produced by the Toronto Automobile Dealers Association last week with many of my colleagues.

TADA represents dealers from Ontario's number one industry: automotive. These dealerships bring thousands of jobs and revenue to our province. In fact, in any given week, 47,000 people are employed by dealerships in Ontario.

TADA is also active in the community, contributing to the Canadian Safe School Network and the Trillium Gift of Life Network, among others. TADA deserves recognition for their efforts to support our struggling economy and various community groups.

The auto show itself is Canada's largest consumer show, attracting over 300,000 visitors every year. The show features over 1,000 automobiles, with an estimated value of the exhibits at the show, not including the vehicles, of \$60 million. The estimated value of the cars alone is \$30 million, the amount that our deficit may be in a few years.

I want to thank the CIAS board of directors for the successful event, including CIAS president Joel Cohen and board members Sandy Liguori, Frank Romeo, Benjamin Leung and Ron Loveys.

I'm very familiar with the effects that dealerships have on employment in communities. My family is in the car business, and has been for over 80 years.

Essentially, new-car dealerships are an integral aspect of Ontario's economy, providing thousands of jobs, and should be commended for those efforts, especially during this tenuous time for hard-working families.

1510

TEMISKAMING NORDIC SKI CLUB

Mr. John Vanthof: On Saturday, February 25, the Temiskaming Nordic Ski Club celebrated its 20th anniversary. The many smiling faces were as radiant as the beautiful winter sunshine. With 18 kilometres of world-class skate and classic skiing trails, the 300 members are justifiably proud of the facility that they have built. The beautiful log chalet is the perfect place to wind down after a run.

The creation and maintenance of the ski club is truly a co-operative effort. The Ontario government, the township of Coleman and neighbouring landowners have provided the land base, and all the labour is provided by volunteers. The club members are justifiably proud of the fact that all this has been accomplished without incurring any debt.

The anniversary celebration was tinged with sadness: One of the club's founding members passed away in January. Doug Worth was a shining light not only for the ski club but across the area. He taught Timiskaming District Secondary School for a quarter of a century. Doug was one of those teachers who took a keen interest in the lives and achievements of his students long after they left the classroom. He was passionate about math, jazz music and, of course, the outdoors. He was not only one of the founders of the club but one of its early explorers, making trails there with snowshoes years before the club was formed. Mr. Doug Worth's memorial service was held in the school gymnasium and was attended by hundreds of his friends. He will be fondly remembered by those who enjoy the trails that he helped create.

AUTO21

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Yesterday morning, I had the pleasure of welcoming AUTO21 to the Ontario Legislature. AUTO21 is Canada's automotive R&D program, supported through the government of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence. And what better place to house it than in Windsor?

AUTO21's mission is to build a stronger automotive sector in Canada through excellence in public and private sector collaborative research and the development of human and social capital.

I also had the opportunity to meet with AUTO21's executive team in Windsor, and I have to say that they truly live up to their motto of "Innovation through Research Excellence."

Windsor has a proud automotive and manufacturing history. I was amazed by the support that AUTO21 was providing local industry as well as provincially, helping position Ontario as a leader in world-class R&D.

Empowering our researchers is a key to creating a vibrant and prosperous industry. AUTO21 brings together nearly 200 top Canadian researchers at 46 universities and partners them with 120 industry and government partners; as well, it provides students with opportunities for practical research experience.

Speaker, as the MPP for Windsor West, I would like to congratulate AUTO21 for their great work in enhancing Ontario's position as a world-class leader in automotive research and development.

INTERNATIONAL RARE DISEASE DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to welcome Simon Ibell of the iBelieve Foundation. Welcome.

Today marks International Rare Disease Day, an event that's committed to bringing awareness to rare diseases, their impact on patients and the need for greater access to treatment. Due to small patient populations, companies often have little incentive to develop drugs for rare conditions.

Caught between debilitating illness and a rare diagnosis, patients are left to fight for their lives by seeking their own funding, research and cures. Approximately one in 12 Canadians, or 2.8 million people, suffer from one of 7,000 rare diseases. Most rare diseases are life-threatening or debilitating. About 80% are genetic, and 75% affect infants and children.

Unfortunately, unlike other jurisdictions around the world, Ontario has yet to develop a comprehensive co-operative strategy to tackle rare diseases and provide the care that every Ontarian deserves.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Simon and everyone who is committed to raising awareness on this important issue. Your commitment to this worthy cause is both encouraging and inspirational. Thank you, Simon.

NATIONAL BRAIN AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to take this opportunity to share with the Ontario Legislature that March is National Brain Awareness Month. Brain awareness month is championed by Neurological Health Charities Canada, a coalition of 26 health charities working to improve the quality of life for people living with neurological diseases, disorders and injuries.

The coming month is an opportunity for us to be mindful of the importance of brain health and safety, recognizing that the brain is the body's most critical organ. With brain issues, every aspect of one's life can be affected. You may be surprised to learn that in this province more than two million people are living with a neurological condition for which there are limited treatments and no cures. Brain conditions affect young and old, and the impact is felt by families and communities across Ontario.

Living with a brain condition is more than a health issue because, inevitably, a chronic brain disorder permanently changes a life. It creates issues and challenges that did not previously exist. It impacts everything about the present and the future, including family relationships, employment, housing, financial stability, education, health and social interaction.

As our population ages, the prevalence of neurological conditions is expected to increase significantly. For example, the number of Ontarians with dementia is expected to increase twofold in the next 15 years.

I encourage all members to learn more about these challenges and those who live with them, and to reflect on how we might improve the lives of those affected through specialized care, neuroscience research and ensuring that our youth understand the importance of protecting the health and safety of this most vital organ.

BARRHAVEN FOOD CUPBOARD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Do you want to hear some good news?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Of course, everyone wants to hear some good news every once in a while. We know we're dealing with some tough economic times here in the province of Ontario, and that extends to many of the households in our communities. But let me tell you some good news of how my community came together just before Christmas to make a difference in the lives of so many families.

On December 13, I received an email from the Barrhaven Food Cupboard that said that for the first time ever, our affluent community had an empty food cupboard. I had a regularly scheduled breakfast on the 17th. My staff moved quickly into action with the Barrhaven Food Cupboard, and in three days, media like CFRA, the Barrhaven Independent, the EMC community newspaper and the Ottawa Sun drove people to our food bank. We were able to work together to feed hundreds of people a free pancake breakfast, and they raised for us in three short days over \$1,000 in cash that was going to feed all of the families in need, but also, we raised so much food that we were able to feed all those families for two weeks.

As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, right before Christmas, the Barrhaven community has come together in a way that they hadn't in the past. They're going to be more organized for this food cupboard.

I want to say thank you to Ken Ross, who has taken on that issue—he is with Ross' Independent Grocer—as well as other people like Ken Lee, who sprung into action so quickly.

Mr. Speaker, there is good news across Ontario, and it's happening in our communities, and we need to thank those volunteers who make it happen.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I want to wish you and all members of this House a very happy Pink Shirt Day, and I want to thank all members who are wearing pink today in support of this great cause, including, obviously, members behind me who are quite extravagant—I'm not sure if it's exactly pink; nonetheless, I am basking in his reflected glow.

As we often say when we talk about putting a stop to bullying in our schools, this is not something that can be done by any one person. It takes all of us, speaking with one voice and working together to make the lives of our young people better and to give them hope. Without the support and dedication of students, parents, teachers, school board staff and community partners, we can't fight bullying. Pink Shirt Day is a perfect example of the impact we can have when we speak with one voice, when we work together to make positive change and inspire others to do the same.

Pink Shirt Day started when a ninth grader in Nova Scotia was bullied simply for wearing a pink shirt. Seeing what was going on, two schoolmates of that boy brought pink shirts to school and handed them out to friends. These two young men decided that they weren't going to stand idly by while someone was being bullied. They took action to help one of their schoolmates, to show that there was nothing wrong with boys wearing pink, and in the process, they started a nationwide movement.

1520

Mr. Speaker, the power of what those two students and fellow students did, the power of that act of compassion and solidarity, was to tell their schoolmate and all victims of bullying that you are not alone. That feeling of loneliness, of isolation, is a feeling that many students have felt, especially students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer, or even students who may be perceived to just be different. Those young people need to hear not only from their fellow students but from the adults in their life, from their teachers, their mentors and from elected officials at all levels of government. They need to hear: You are not alone. They need to hear: You are supported. They need to hear: You are loved. They need to hear these words, and we as adults must be clear as day: We will not tolerate, for a second, anyone making them feel otherwise.

As my colleague Laurel Broten, the Minister of Education, has said in this House many times, the words we use every day must send a clear message that we will not tolerate bullying, discrimination and hatred. Those words must be used to send a much better message, one of acceptance, one of caring and one of support.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that our government is working to deliver that message through our words, and like students, teachers and staff who are wearing pink today, we are delivering that message through our actions—and I must acknowledge that members of all political parties in this Legislature stand behind these efforts.

In November, the Minister of Education introduced legislation that, if passed, will help make our schools safer by ensuring that boards take preventive measures against bullying, that boards consider tougher consequences for bullying and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all. The proposed legislation is part of a comprehensive action plan to make our schools safe and make them more accepting places to learn. We will continue to look at new ways to raise public awareness about the issue of bullying.

Our plan also features expanded mental health supports for children and youth that were introduced in the last budget and which are already finding their way into our schools. I can't stress enough, Mr. Speaker, just how important these mental health supports are for our children and our youth. For young people who are bullied, that feeling of isolation and loneliness can lead to depression, and we need to be there for our kids when they need us the most. We're hiring new mental health workers across the province to make sure that mental

health services are available when and where they're needed most, because we need to be there for our children and our youth. They need to know that they're not alone. They need to know that they are supported and that they are loved.

Once again, I want to commend all members of all parties for their diligent and very serious efforts to eradicate bullying in our schools and throughout every environment in Ontario. Let's make sure we deliver on that promise, that our actions match those words not just today, but every day here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to support Pink Shirt Day here in the province of Ontario and, just as importantly, across Canada. I'm very proud of my colleagues here today who showed up in pink. I know, with our wardrobes that we have to pack on a Sunday night, they preplanned, many of these members, because they don't come from the city of Toronto.

I also had to preplan for pink day, because my daughter is in grade 1 at Manordale Public School in Nepean, one of the finest institutions in this whole province, and they celebrate this awareness day. So on the weekend, my husband and I were planning for the week and made sure that she had something pink to wear today. We were talking about Pink Shirt Day, and it was my husband who came out with a quote from Edmund Burke, one of his favourites: that "all that is required for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."

I couldn't be more proud of the people in this Legislature. From time to time we disagree; in fact, that's normal. But one of the good things about this issue, bullying and eradicating it in our province and across Canada, is the fact that we have people from all three political parties who agree that we need to change things, and we're working hard.

Pink Shirt Day was a result of a grassroots initiative in the province I was born and raised in. In fact, the school that introduced Pink Shirt Day, Central Kings high school, was not very far from where my husband went to school. He tells me, of course, that Central Kings was much rougher than West Kings, where he went, but it speaks to what can happen when we encourage our youth to make a change in their communities. In this case, there was a young fellow being bullied because he wore a pink shirt to school, so two of the seniors in the school decided they weren't going to stand for that anymore. They bought 50 T-shirts at a local store, and the whole student body decided they were going to participate; 50 people showed up and circled that young fellow. Let me give you an example. Some of you live in big cities. Growing up in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, we had 105 people in our grade 12 class. That's a very significant chunk of the student population there.

Today, people from around the world recognize Pink Shirt Day as a day of change. Now, I might say this: We shouldn't just have one day to try to eradicate bullying; it

should be every day. We should talk about it with our children and their teachers. We should make sure we communicate that we do not tolerate it.

One very important thing I learned growing up was that it's important to respect—not necessarily accept—other people's points of view. But it is important that all of us in this chamber know that this is a problem. I have to say that as we move forward with debating bullying in this chamber, there are some significant points on the table.

There's one person in particular since I've been elected to this House who has stood above the rest, who has worked hard to make sure that bullying is not only addressed in our schools but in this chamber. That's why I'd like to just recognize at this point in time my colleague Elizabeth Witmer, the former education minister, a former education critic, a former board chair and a former teacher, who has brought to this place a sensitivity that I think started long before what we've seen in our schools lately, which is causing some children in our province to take their own lives or to quit school or to self-harm. Her leadership, I think, started much before this issue hit the headlines, and I really want to thank her for that.

Now we have a minority Parliament here and we have an opportunity not only to speak to this issue and to communicate to parents, students and teachers, but to change things with legislation. As a member of the opposition in a minority Parliament, I can think of no better time when great minds across this province can get together to put forward the right piece of legislation that will actually solve some of these problems. We can't be politically partisan on this issue. In fact, I urge members not to be. There are too many, too many, too many students who need us to do better.

We now know we have race-based, gender-based, height-based, weight-based and red-hair, freckle-faced-based bullying in our schools. It's much worse than when any of us were there. Now we have cyberbullying, which makes it feel unsafe to be in your own home if you are a young person who has been bullied. In fact, today I was on Twitter, and a Global TV IT person was tweeting that she now finds that her former tormenters want to be her friends on Facebook, and this individual is now an adult. I mean, that's how it reaches us and that's what happens.

So let's go back to Edmund Burke's quote. He once said, "All that is required for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." I say today, we are all good people. I know we are all here with the best of intentions. In today's Vancouver Sun, John Izzo took that statement from Edmund Burke further and said, "The converse is also true: All that is required to change things is for more of us—parents, teens and bystanders—to step up, speak up and let our voices be heard." Very well said, John Izzo.

To all of the members in this assembly, happy Pink Shirt Day. We're making a difference. Let's take that back to our communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Responses? The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, as well as the member from Nepean–Carleton, for their commitment and words on this very important issue that is before this House.

1530

Bullying affects every community and every school in Ontario. It can devastate the lives of our young people and impact our lives as adults. We are all very aware of the tragic impact bullying has had on the lives of our youth and of some who have been driven to take their own lives. Today, we remember these youth and all of the youth who face harassment and discrimination, and we must make a commitment to making Ontario's communities safe and accepting places for all of our young people.

Today, the statistics paint a concerning picture. A 2009 survey of grades 7 to 12 students by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found that almost one in three students have been bullied at school. A 2011 national climate survey by Egale found that 64% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students, and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents, felt unsafe at school.

But beyond the statistics, we simply need to listen to the voices of our youth, voices like the two Nova Scotia high school students who took a stand in 2007 and started Pink Shirt Day. It was these youth who saw the devastating impact of bullying on a fellow student, and it was these youth who understood the importance of awareness and taking a stand. The youth have been leaders at working to end bullying, and as MPPs, we must ask ourselves: Are we doing our part to help end bullying? Are we listening to Ontario's teachers, teachers who have been leaders in the goals of eliminating bullying from our classrooms? The sad answer to this question is no; we're not doing enough.

The government has focused on a new bill, Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, and they seem to imply that this will be the solution to bullying in Ontario. But the causes of bullying are complex, as is going to be the solution. The Safe Schools Action Team said this in 2008, as did the roots-of-violence report. Have these recommendations been implemented? Do we have a comprehensive approach in place? Again, the sad answer is no.

For starters, we must ask ourselves: Will this bill provide teachers and school boards with the resources to address bullying and issues like homophobia? We know that Bill 13 will ramp up the consequences for bullying, but it provides no guarantee that students can start a gay-straight alliance in their school. Egale says that by simply existing, GSAs present students with the idea that LGBTQ identities have a place in the school, and in society at large. "Directly engaging LGBTQ youth and their allies within school, as well as those who are ambivalent regarding LGBTQ themes, is an excellent means towards addressing school climate, isolation, promoting

social connectedness....” So why is this government failing to protect the rights of students to start a GSA?

Bill 13 does not address other factors which are undermining school safety, such as timely access to professional supports, alternative programming for at-risk or special needs students, or inadequate staffing and funding for anti-bullying programs.

The children and youth of this province are looking to us as MPPs to do more than simply say the right words on Pink Shirt Day. They want action and they want communities free of bullying, harassment and violence. New Democrats stand with Ontario’s youth, and we are ready to make the changes needed to make this a reality.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O’Toole: I have a petition here from my riding—very important. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part” of the community of Blackstock in the area of Scugog township and is an important part of the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, ‘Rural schools help to keep communities strong’; and

“Whereas schools in rural areas are” indeed “community places; and

“Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning experience that emphasizes a community atmosphere, individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

“Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves to be governed by a rural school policy;”—a difference—“and

“Whereas the McGuinty government found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found” one penny “to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock;

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

“That Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School under the school board’s accommodation review process until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of” small “schools in rural” settings across Ontario.

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to Judy, one of the pages here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Sciences North, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page David to bring it to the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition from Avalon Public School parents in Ottawa–Orléans.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

“Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education’s own occupancy formula;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

“Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014.”

I support this petition, and I send it forward with Rachel.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: I have another large stack of petitions here opposed to industrial wind construction.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

“Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

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

“Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning.”

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

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition reads as follows:

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;
1540

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, the Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

I certainly agree. Thousands more are to follow. I will sign this and give it to Shirley, our page.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: Speaker, I’m pleased to present a petition, and I thank you for that recognition.

“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” significant “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”—commercial fill—“ in abandoned pits and quarries” and elsewhere; “and

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;”—I spoke to the Ministry of the Environment on this today.

“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” and the Oak Ridges moraine, specifically in my riding of Durham.

Thank you for the opportunity. I’m pleased to sign, support it and present it to James Newman, actually.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from a really fine individual, Robin Bissett from Cobourg, Ontario. He wanted to make sure that I got his petition, and I told him I’d read it into the record for him this afternoon. It is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with Mr. Bissett’s petition. I’ll affix my signature to it and give it to page Samantha.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We do have a petition here signed by a great number of constituents in the great riding of Oxford county, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tavistock’s Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

“Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

“Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

“Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

“We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario’s 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds.”

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make this presentation of the petition. I will sign it, as I agree with it.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Grand Erie District School Board has purposely gerrymandered busing, circumvented its own catchment areas, avoided all but the most basic facility improvements and actively positioned PDCS for closure before and during the ARC process;

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

“We petition the Legislature of Ontario to conduct an inquiry into the actions of the Grand Erie District School Board over the past 10 years leading up to the current accommodation review.

“In addition, we call upon the Legislature to put a moratorium on all current and pending school closures in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with these sentiments and affix my signature.

SKILLED TRADES

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

“Whereas a new policy from the Electrical Safety Authority that mandates that all electrical contractors must have at least one licensed master electrician on staff for every business effective December 31, 2011, is forcing electrical contracting small businesses in Ontario out of business;

“Whereas this ESA policy severely impacts small electrical contracting businesses in Ontario. George, in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who has been in the electrical trade for the past 51 years and a small business owner for the past 36 ... , who has good standing with the Electrical Safety Authority, Ontario Hydro, local utilities, who follows the same rules and regulations of the ESA, follows the Ontario electrical codes, adheres to the same inspections and pays the same fees as large companies, will not be allowed to renew his electrical ... licence. Effective December 31, 2011, George” was no longer licensed to practise in Ontario and he was forced out of business.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Consumer Services to direct the Electrical Safety Authority of Ontario to modify the licensing requirements to allow

small electrical contractors and self-employed electricians to work in the residential and rural market without the unnecessary burden of obtaining a master electrician licence, or at the very minimum, grandfather those who are currently qualified and entitled to work in Ontario.”

I will be signing this in support and agreement.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just received another petition from a good friend of mine, Terry Carpenter, who lives at 726 Bellaire Street in the south end of Peterborough, Ontario.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

“Whereas real progress has been made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States” of America.

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give to page Kriti.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here from many who come from the fine village of Norwood in the member for Peterborough’s riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

“Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

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

“Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for

natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning.”

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition and I will affix my name to it—from the village of Norwood.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition reads as follows; it’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

1550

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, the Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

Of course I agree, and I am going to give it to Darren to be delivered to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reaffirms its support for the planned reduction of the business tax rate on Ontario’s job creators to 10% by next year, to help get the nearly 600,000 unemployed Ontarians working again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Leader of the Opposition has moved motion number 1. I recognize the leader.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I’m pleased to initiate debate on this opposition day motion focused on creating jobs and opportunity again in the province of Ontario by making sure that we have a tax climate and an investment climate that is number one in Canada for creating jobs again.

The issue before the assembly this afternoon is the business climate in Ontario today. It’s best characterized, at best, by uncertainty, which you and I as individuals may find uncomfortable—we have to live with it from time to time; that’s part of life—but in business, uncertainty can be deadly. To business leaders, small business owners and planners, uncertainty is a serious problem. Sadly, uncertainty can be a fatal problem.

Today in Ontario, our job creators, our job-creating businesses, are not confident about a lot of things when it comes to the current government of Ontario. They’ve watched a pre-election deficit of \$15 billion become a post-election deficit of \$16 billion almost like magic, and now they’re seeing from an objective, respected econ-

omist, Don Drummond, a forecast of a \$30-billion deficit by 2017-18 if we don’t change course. In fact, Mr. Drummond estimates it will be nearly tripling Ontario’s provincial debt to almost \$400 billion, certainly at variance with what we heard from the government in the recent budget and the campaign. It’s created a lot of uncertainty for families across the province and public sector employees, of course, but also business investors and job creators.

They’ve also watched not simply one but two major international credit rating agencies sound the alarm about the government’s paralysis in confronting our jobs crisis and our debt crisis here in Ontario. Today, as we debate this important motion, they’re watching us right now to see what the next steps will be.

People worried about getting a job, those who are underemployed, those who are considering investing in Ontario have a very simple question for all of us: “What is the tax rate going to be on my business next year?”

In fact, Speaker, to be technically accurate, they don’t even know what their tax rate is going to be in a few months. Right now, under the laws passed by this assembly, on July 1, 2012, the tax rate on businesses is to go down; and then a following reduction on July 1, 2013, towards a 10% tax rate.

If businesses, whatever their size, don’t know what the tax rate is going to be and they don’t know what the government’s plan is to reduce the deficit, how do they make business plans? What kind of signal does that send to those contemplating investing in Canada or North America that Ontario should be the place to invest? I want to see them investing here, but given this uncertainty, how can they forecast sales? How can they forecast revenues and investment costs? How can they hire new people without knowing what the game plan is? They don’t even know what the tax rate is going to be in the next few months. So imagine what kind of impact that has on stability, on predictability, on confidence in Ontario—the things that businesses need most to do what they do best: invest, innovate, compete, create jobs.

That’s the question largely for my colleagues opposite. They can answer that question, and they can vote for our motion today to lower taxes on job creators and help get our economy moving again. I know that everyone—each of us, all 107 members, whether you represent the city of Toronto, the beautiful Niagara-Hamilton area, northern Ontario, Stoney Creek, eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario or the London area that was devastated by the closure of Cat recently—all of us know. We have people that have come to us in our offices and at town hall meetings; they’re worried about their job. They’re worried about where their sons and daughters are going to go when they graduate and they want to know what the game plan is. So we have an opportunity this afternoon to send a signal to say that we’re on the right path and to say to those folks who are out of work, looking for jobs and worried about their kids, small business owners and large, what direction Ontario is heading in.

Clearly, the Ontario PC caucus wants to see Ontario as the best place in Canada to create jobs and start a busi-

ness and to see it grow. We need to be open for business again. That's why people deserve some straight talk, directness from Queen's Park and an answer this evening on what that game plan is. So let's have that candid look at the facts before us.

As I said in this House and my colleagues have said as well, we do have a major debt crisis in the province of Ontario. The Drummond report has glaringly confirmed that the size and cost of government is simply unsustainable, and the prospect of a \$30-billion deficit makes that frighteningly clear. So, too, are the warnings by the major bond rating agencies that unless we take action, Speaker, and immediate action, we could face downgrades on our creditworthiness. That means the cost of borrowing on this large accumulated debt is going to increase and perpetuate the spiral.

Here's fact number 2. While urgent action is needed on our bloated spending to rein in the size and cost of our public sector, we know this is a fact as well: You simply can't cut your way to prosperity. You need a jobs-and-growth plan at the same time. There's no doubt that getting the deficit under control and going towards balance by 2017-18 will send a good signal; that will help us on our way. But you need a jobs-and-growth plan focused on opening Ontario up for investment.

And each and every day, my colleagues and I, we try to present good ideas to do so. We recognize the government is not going to take them all. We live in the real world, not the dream world: We know they're not going to agree to all of them. But they actually once believed in lowering the business tax rate to 10% next year. I hope that they still do.

We need to focus not only on balancing the books and responding to the Drummond report, we also need to focus on that long-neglected other side of the ledger: our stagnant private sector economy. It is this need for an integrated approach to turning our fortunes around that is missing. The Drummond report was part of that solution. We have other ideas on reducing the size and cost of government, including a public sector pay freeze.

What the Drummond report didn't produce was that path forward on the jobs side. So we're going to help with that. I think one of the challenges we have is that we've seen the government pull more and more ideas off the table. I think it's some \$4.2 billion in spending to date and counting. The hole is so deep that some observers, including DBRS, the Dominion Bond Rating Service, are showing a strong concern, even a fear, that this government won't follow through on reducing spending.

What I worry about is they're going to turn to tax increases instead. And I don't want to engage in a silly game of semantics, whether they call it a freeze or an increase. The fact of the matter is, if they don't follow through on the 10% rate reduction for 2013, taxes will be higher than they otherwise would have been, and that sends the wrong signal to businesses that have been counting on this, and job creators. It is going to make creating jobs in Ontario that much more difficult, and that will rob us of the competitive advantage that other

provinces, like Alberta and BC have. They're already at 10%.

1600

And this is the other side of the equation: the need to kick-start the real economy with a pro-growth agenda; to unleash Ontario's once dynamic private sector with the right tax and regulatory climate that gets government out of the way, that gets behind businesses to drive investment and innovation; to create well-paid jobs in the province of Ontario again—and all with the ultimate goal of making government more focused, affordable and efficient, while giving private sector the room to do what it does best: to compete, to innovate, to create jobs. But we're not seeing enough of that in Ontario today.

So we will continue to advocate for an immediate legislated public sector pay freeze, and we will subject government initiatives to a very straightforward three-part stress test: (1) Does it reduce the size and cost of government? (2) does it create private sector jobs again? and (3) does it bring greater accountability and transparency to government? And if the government makes the tough decisions when it comes to spending reforms, we'll support them. We actually want to see it happen. We'll be serious about our role, but we'll be demanding that it passes those three tests.

So I think the only way forward, Speaker, out of this mess that we're in, after years of overspending, is to be very direct and level with the people of the province of Ontario. The answer, when it comes to spending, has got to be no, we just can't afford it. But the answer to private sector job creation has got to be yes, and it's got to be yes again, Speaker. And we're going to keep pressing.

We in the Ontario PC caucus have never stopped believing in the great future of this beautiful province of Ontario and its hard-working, industrious, innovative people. We still believe our best days are yet to come, Mr. Speaker; we just need to make the right decisions to help them out, to move forward again.

We're putting good ideas on the table. We want to modernize our apprenticeship system to help create 200,000 more jobs in the skilled trades: electricians, plumbers, welders. There's too much talent going out west right now. So let's take our apprenticeship system into the 21st century, move to a 1-to-1 ratio and open up 200,000 positions.

When it comes to our regulatory environment, we need to drain this swamp that seems to bog everybody down when they have the audacity to try to create a job in the province of Ontario. Let's change the attitude, and stop this cycle where they have to wait impatiently for that email or that call from a bureaucrat that never arrives, or three bureaucrats giving three different directions. Let's actually get behind our businesses, get out of their way, help them to innovate and create jobs. Let's change the attitude, clear aside these regulatory burdens that are holding us back and support innovation and job creation in every sector in the province of Ontario.

The third part of our plan: making energy reliable and affordable. I know there's going to be no parades for me

at some of the solar or wind turbine companies in the province of Ontario; I recognize that, Speaker. I just think that the approach that we've taken has turned what's been a historic strength in Ontario of reliable and affordable energy, which made Ontario the manufacturing heartland not just of Canada but of North America, that made us the engine that drove this mighty country—I believe those days can still happen in Ontario if we got an energy policy that actually made sense, that supported job creation in the province of Ontario.

Finally, Speaker, an essential part of this plan is to lower the business tax rate to stay on the path we're on today, to send the signal of stability; that we're not changing our minds once again when it comes to business tax rates, that we want to make Ontario open for business investment again.

I do hope my colleagues opposite will support the plan they actually had once agreed upon: to go to that 10% business tax rate by 2013, to stay on this path of opening up Ontario. We're not going to solve all of Ontario's problems on debt alone. We need a growth and a jobs plan. I'm going to fight for that every day, Speaker, because we believe that there are better days ahead of us. We believe Ontario will lead this great country again. We believe Ontario will lead North America again, but we have to make sure we have a jobs and growth plan, and I hope my colleagues opposite will support our plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Leader of the third party?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very, very much. I'm glad to get up to have a chance to speak to the motion today.

You know, New Democrats have known for quite some time and have believed for quite some time—and we continue to believe, Speaker—that no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways are not the right way for Ontario to go, and I think it won't surprise anyone that New Democrats will be voting against the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon. I'm looking forward to seeing, however, how the Liberal members across the way are going to be voting on this motion this afternoon.

You know, when New Democrats called the Premier's corporate tax cuts into question, here are some of the responses that we—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could I ask that the sidebars—everyone listened intently to the leader of the official opposition. The leader of the third party deserves the same treatment, so if you have any sidebars, I would ask you to take them outside. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

As I was starting to say, I'm curious to see how the Liberals across the way are going to be voting on this motion, because when New Democrats called the Premier's corporate tax cuts into question, there were some very interesting responses that came from the Liberal benches, and I'm going to share a few of them with you:

“What the NDP want to do is create jobs in Alberta.” That's what the Minister of Finance said on February 24, 2011. The Ontario NDP plan will “kill jobs,” the Minister of Finance said as well on February 24, 2011. “Ontarians know a vote for the NDP means killing jobs,” said the finance minister on October 2, 2011.

Here's what the Minister of Finance said when New Democrats proposed an end to the corporate tax giveaway for high-priced meals and box seats: “It represents killing a huge job creation initiative.” That was on September 13, 2011. On September 9, “‘The NDP's plan is a crushing job killer' given the party's promise to scrap corporate tax cuts, said Finance Minister Dwight Duncan.”

Speaker, when we tabled a motion in December, not so long ago, when this House last sat before the Christmas break, we called for a halt to further corporate tax cuts. That's what our motion said, and here's what Ontario's Liberal Party president—and the Ottawa Centre MPP—said to our motion: “The motion that is being presented by the NDP ... is going to harm Ontario's economy in these tough economic times. It is not going to help in terms of creation of new jobs. I really urge all members to vote against this motion, because what we need to do at this moment is to ensure that Ontario is a good place to do business.”

Countless, countless, countless times, the Liberals called our proposals to stop the corporate tax cuts “job-killing.” Now they appear to send signals that they're going to follow our lead and actually freeze the corporate taxes. Now, I welcome that. The Premier and the finance minister are suggesting that corporate tax giveaways are not a priority now. Well, I agree with that; in fact, I don't think they should have been a priority for quite some time.

But why was it a priority for the Liberal government to do this, to cut corporate taxes, when Ontario's deficit was at \$20 billion? Why was it a priority to cut corporate taxes when families struggling to pay the bills weren't getting the help they needed? Why was it a priority to cut corporate taxes when local emergency rooms were being closed in the province of Ontario? In fact, it wasn't that long ago that the Liberals themselves were railing at the Conservatives over their planned corporate tax cuts. Over 70 times in this Legislature, Speaker, the Premier criticized the Conservatives' corporate tax cuts. He called them reckless, he called them irresponsible—and it was the Conservative government at the time that put the brakes on corporate tax cuts. I have to say we've certainly come full circle, wouldn't you think?

The fact is that Ontario's corporate tax rates are ultra-competitive, and they were ultra-competitive even before the recent cuts that this Liberal government has been implementing started to take place.

1610

You know what? Our corporate tax rates are lower than 50 states in the United States. They're 10% lower than most of the Great Lakes states that surround us and who are our direct competitors. Don't take that from us.

Don't take that from me. It was a key point in this government's 2008 budget. That was one of their key factors in their budget documents.

In 2011, a PricewaterhouseCoopers study said that Canada's corporate income tax rates were well below those of the US, below those of Australia, below those of Finland, of France, Germany, India, Italy, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, among others. Speaker, ours were lower. Now, we have a recent OECD study that ranks Canada's combined corporate income tax rates 10 points below the United States and Japan.

The reality is that as we drive down corporate taxes, we are not getting anything for it. We're not getting jobs, and we are not getting investment. In fact, I've heard the Premier rue so many times already the fact that investment simply does not seem to be coming to Ontario, and that's with a number of percentage points shaved off, from 14% down to 11.5%, of the corporate tax rate. It is a strategy that has not worked for jobs. It is a strategy that has not worked for investment. It is a strategy that has helped to cobble our revenue stream, however.

If the billions that federal and provincial governments have spent on corporate tax giveaways were actually working to create jobs, there wouldn't be 600,000 Ontarians out of a job right now and investment wouldn't be declining in this province.

You know, the HST and lower corporate income tax rates have transferred roughly \$10 billion into the corporate sector from our treasury, on top of all of the corporate tax handouts from the federal government as well. Ontario families have paid the price through higher taxes on the basics. There is little evidence to show that they have worked to create jobs or stimulate investment, as I've said. Investment, in fact, as a share of GDP in this province has declined steadily in the past decade from 8% down to 6%.

Do you know what's happening to the dollars that are going to the corporations, Speaker? The one thing that is increasing, the one thing that is making a difference in Ontario—the cash reserves of the corporate sector are increasing significantly. Cash reserves are increasing significantly. That's what we have to show for our largesse in our corporate tax cuts in this province. They're taking the money that the treasury badly needs and they're stashing it away in reserves, and we're not benefiting at all from that. Ontarians are not benefiting one iota. Our economy is not benefiting, and workers are not benefiting. Families are not benefiting.

Instead of investing, corporations are sitting on record levels of cash. Non-financial corporations had \$477 billion in cash reserves in the second quarter of 2011. That's up 200% from a decade earlier and an astonishing 750% from two decades earlier. Something is not right with this equation. Why do we keep giving these corporations more and more tax cuts when they're simply shovelling that money into their cash reserves? It is absolutely the wrong thing to do.

The heart of the problem is that there's absolutely no incentive for companies to use this money to make in-

vestments, no incentive whatsoever. They can do anything that they want with the money they get in their corporate tax cuts. They could create jobs, but they don't have to create jobs. They could invest, but they don't have to invest. Over the past 10 years, they have done neither; they have not invested and they have not created jobs. They're not creating jobs, they're not investing, and they haven't done any of that since this government started yet another round of corporate tax cuts in this province.

You know, we're not the only ones who are arguing that these tax cuts haven't led to more investment or more productivity. I'm not the only one who is saying that. Here's what Don Drummond concluded in his recent paper. He wrote the following: "For many years the author believed that Canada's weak productivity performance reflected inappropriate public policy. Despite most of the public policy agenda that was put forward to improve productivity being implemented, productivity growth in this country since 2000 has actually deteriorated. This suggests that the private sector bears more responsibility for Canada's productivity malaise than previous thought."

Well, eureka, Mr. Drummond. Thank you for letting us know something that has been as plain as the nose on all of our faces for quite some time. Yet this motion simply follows along a path that gets us to nowhere, a path that gets us as a province to nowhere, a path that gets families to nowhere, a path that gets people who are looking for work to nowhere, a path that gets the desire for more investment in Ontario to nowhere, a path that gets our treasury to nowhere, a path that gets our public services to nowhere, a path that gets our deficit reduction process to nowhere. Speaker, it's a path to nowhere. New Democrats have known it's a path to nowhere for years and years and years. The Liberals used to believe that, then they didn't believe it anymore. Now maybe they're starting to believe it again.

The evidence is clear: This motion should not be supported. New Democrats will not support it. Corporate tax cuts do nothing for Ontario, and they must be stopped.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. As I begin, I considered a point of order pursuant to standing order number 14. I considered seeking the Speaker's opinion on whether today's opposition motion is in order, based on one or either of two criteria. The first was standing order 23(f). It is arguable that today's opposition day motion reflects on the deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 162, an act respecting budget measures—May 27, 2009—on which the House has already voted, and the credibility of the opposition Conservatives, who now advocate a budget measure which on that occasion in 2009 they opposed. The second is standing order 23(e) and whether today's opposition day motion anticipates the Budget Measures Act later this spring.

Now, Speaker, I'm not going to ask for that point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This opposition day motion to which the member is speaking now has already been approved by the table. They've gone through the checkpoints. They've gone through the checklist. If he wants to go on and talk about this, so be it, but we've got a serious issue before this House, and that's what we should be discussing, not some kind of a game from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I don't consider—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Can I have your attention, please?

I don't consider that a point of order. I also believe that he is tinkering on whether he wants to call a point of order or not; we're not quite sure. I would suggest that we get to the meat of the issue. If you do want to call a point of order, by all means do it. Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. My colleague seems to have jumped the gun because, as I said, although it is arguably a point of order, I am not going to call that point of order. Here's why: I'm a Liberal, and no matter how wacky, how unworkable, how ideologically motivated a matter brought before this House is, I think it should at least be heard, and I think this matter should at least be heard. So I will not ask the Speaker's opinion—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm not a Progressive Conservative—not even close—but I consider “wacky” an unparliamentary term, in referring to a motion before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll rule on that as a bit of a stretch. We'll appreciate it if that word isn't used again, but I will not ask you to withdraw that.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. At one time I lived in a province where that word referred to by the member was the nickname of the Premier.

We realize there is no substance and possibly even less merit to this motion, but it will be instructive to debate it today.

1620

Let's start by pointing out the members here today who will presumably vote in favour of corporate tax cuts in today's opposition motion and who voted against it in 2009. They would be the members from Wellington—Halton Hills, Sarnia—Lambton, Haldimand—Norfolk, Halton, Simcoe North, Oxford, Dufferin—Caledon, York—Simcoe, Durham, Oshawa, Kitchener—Waterloo and Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Now, Speaker, whether these members stand up and vote—unless they choose to abstain—they need to consider whether their vote is either breaking a promise or merely doing a normal, ordinary, everyday Conservative flip-flop.

The members opposite, Speaker, advocate choking off the supply of financial oxygen to the 13 million of us in Ontario during a time when the rest of the world is simply not buying as much from us as it once did. Ontar-

ians disagree with them. The Conservatives would have the province withdraw money from all of us and give it to people who are either flush with cash and are not asking for more of it, or whose business volume is not generating much taxable income and therefore a corporate tax cut is of no value to them.

In this spirit, Speaker, I would call the attention of the official opposition to an enlightening article in today's Toronto Star business pages—the business pages. It is entitled, “Why Incompetent People Are Too Incompetent to Know They're Incompetent.”

To recap, Speaker, when we vent the steam and strip away the frothy rhetoric on today's motion, we are left with this:

(1) The House has already voted on this measure, and on that occasion, the Conservatives voted against the corporate tax cut they advocate today;

(2) The potential beneficiaries of the flip-flop tax cut advocated by the Conservatives are either not asking for it or likely couldn't use it even if it were enacted;

(3) To Conservatives, right-wing ideology trumps good, solid common sense every time.

Now, Speaker, as finance ministers in Conservative governments in Ontario, Janet Ecker and Jim Flaherty, in their day, postponed tax reductions when prevailing market conditions suggested it would be the prudent, sensible and far-sighted thing to do. How will Ontario then deal with the current challenges and emerge, as we traditionally do from challenging economic times, stronger when we come out than we were when we went in? We have a signature document that spells out the answer to that question each year: It is the annual Ontario budget.

Perhaps today's opposition day motion is a belated act of contrition from the regressive convertibles saying publicly that they should have voted for the Ontario budget in 2009 when they had the chance.

In Ontario households, like the ones I represent in Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville that sent me here, families and businesses don't float on ever-expanding income and march from success to success. We have tough times, and it brings out the best in us. We look at ways of doing what we do faster, smarter, less expensively and more efficiently. We look for things that we've never done before. We try new things. We search for higher values. We change, and we make choices. And if our best intentions before circumstances changed would lead us over a cliff, we don't say to our families, to our employees, our suppliers, and our lenders, “Well, once my mind is made up, reality has to conform to me and not us to reality.”

And so, for the lifelong PC supporters who voted for me three times in a row, they know and respect that, and I'll earn that fourth vote by how I and our government make thoughtful, prudent and intelligent choices, not how we cling to an inflexible, unworkable and ultimately unsuccessful ideology, in a manner advocated by this opposition day motion today. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker.

You know, I share only one thought with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I, too, have to ask myself the question: Are you actually here in a bizarre world, a reverse world, where you actually have to file a motion to try to hold the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty to its own promises, 13 weeks after it renewed those promises? That's what we're here for. We don't want to file a motion like this. We just want those people to do what they said they were going to do.

As recently as November, the Premier himself said they planned to continue on the path of tax cuts and bring things down to 10%. Here we are saying, "Well, keep your promises," and I'm listening to nonsense like this.

What is it exactly that this party hates so much about doing business in Ontario? What is it that they don't understand? Do you think that business is some big iron monster that chews people up and spits them out, or do you think that business is what I think business is? Do you think that business maybe creates economic activity? Maybe business is an association of people who produce goods and services for the betterment of us all, for consumption by us all, so that we can all participate in that economic activity and have some degree of prosperity. That's what you indicated, and we agreed with, when you said you were going to stimulate business by bringing the corporate tax rate down.

Now that you've done a complete turnaround in the course of two or three months because you want to keep your house together, you want to keep your house in order, we are here debating this motion. That's shameful.

The fact of the matter is that the business of Ontario is about the business of everybody, and right now in Ontario what we have is a situation where our unemployment rate is going into the 62nd consecutive month of being the laggard of Confederation, the highest in the country, 8.1%.

Ontario has one of the highest corporate tax rates in Canada: 4.5% at the lower rate; 12% at the higher rate. I wonder how many people who are looking in on this, this afternoon, realize that only one province has higher corporate tax rates. It's New Brunswick. Prince Edward Island is at 1%; Newfoundland and Labrador, 4%; British Columbia, 2.5%; Manitoba, under an NDP government, has a corporate tax rate, at the lower end, of nil.

In the first quarter of this year, guess what Manitoba did? Manitoba had an unemployment rate of 5.4%, the second-lowest among all provinces. So if you want to compare one against the other, that's what you want to do.

Under this government in the province of Ontario, we have lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. We have debt of \$250 billion. We have a projected deficit, by your own economist, of \$30 billion coming up within the next five fiscal years, by 2017-18, and an accumulated debt, by that time, of \$411 billion.

Unemployment in Ontario, as mentioned, is at 8.1% compared to, say, Alberta at 4.9%. The national average

is 7.6%. And the consumer price index, which really combines all of the things that are staples—food and clothing and shelter—has gone up about 10% over the course of the last five years. That's shameful as well. Ontario's projected economic growth rate for 2011 is 2.7%, slowing to 2.3%, and Drummond is talking about 2%.

We have to get away from this. Eight years of spending later, the government hires an economist to tell them what to do. Isn't it a fact that a government is elected to govern and figure out what to do itself and not reverse itself in midstream? That's what the subject of this motion is. Dalton McGuinty basically created a fire, and now he wants to be a fireman. You cannot have it both ways.

There are 362 recommendations from economist Don Drummond, and the instructions are clear: take the 362 recommendations in concert, follow them or tell us what you're going to put back on the table when you take one of them off the table. That's not what you're doing, and please do not mistake us for saying that you should adopt them all. Just tell us what it is you're going to do. The bottom line is that you need a plan. You can't keep making it up as you go along.

We need to encourage business to set up in Ontario and stay in Ontario. We need to create jobs in Ontario. We need to continue with the planned corporate tax cuts that are the subject of this particular motion. We need to attract business. We need to attract investment. The planned reductions in the corporate tax rate would create an estimated 600,000 jobs. Isn't it more than passing strange that that's the number of people who are unemployed in Ontario now?

I implore each and every one of you, regardless of what your party affiliation is, to reconsider getting back on track with what we voted for, with what you proposed in your last budget, and make sure that the corporate tax rates go through. Thank you, Speaker.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm going to be speaking against this motion with as much vigour as I can muster. I await with excitement to see how many Liberals are going to be opposing this particular motion.

I was in committee while our leader spoke on this, but I know that she had some juicy quotes from the Liberals about what they used to say when we said that cutting corporate taxes is the wrong thing to do. And there was a time when the Premier of Ontario used to agree with us. I quoted him in a speech about a couple of days ago when I did my lead on another bill.

It's, of course, with great humour that you read these things, because Liberals have this incredible proclivity to go back and forth on positions willy-nilly, and they don't feel bad about doing it, as I heard from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. Every time they have to change

a position, they simply say, “Well, we need to be practical.”

So at one point McGuinty said that if we cut corporate taxes we’re going to lose jobs, we’re going to have to cut in the hospital sector, we’re going to have to cut in education, and no way Dalton McGuinty was going to do that—a mere couple of years ago. Then, lo and behold, he changes his position and says, “We are committed to corporate tax cuts because we believe, as the Tories do, that it creates jobs.”

Then I hear from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville that we are about to get a change of a Liberal position once again. You guys, how do you deal with it? How do you handle it? How do you sleep? It seems to me that you guys need some psychiatric help on this file. There’s an issue of balance and it’s not any other balance than mental balance. So I urge you to find a way to deal with this particular disequilibrium that you’re experiencing on a regular basis. Good doctor, you know what I’m talking about.

And so when I hear Liberal quotes from a while past: “What the NDP want to do is to create jobs in Alberta,” Minister of Finance, 2/11; “The Ontario NDP plan will kill jobs,” the Minister of Finance says; “Ontarians know a vote for the NDP means killing jobs”—just but a few quotes that I know our leader mentioned and others will when I’m done.

But that sounds a bit like what the Tories are saying today and every day, because these are the market fundamentalists. There was a time when many of you good Liberals seemed to agree. It appears that in the next couple of months, you’re going to change your mind again. You’re killing me. You’re killing me and I’m worried about you. I’m worried about your health. Reassure me that you’re all okay when next you speak on the matter, through you, Speaker.

Look, we know that this is—speaking to the Tories, and to Libs—growth without jobs. We have had tremendous growth in the last 15 years and the jobs have not been proportionate to the corporate tax cuts that we have been giving them, both federally and provincially, and you know it, at least those of you who are reading some deeper books other than the occasional—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Willowdale, when he enters the chamber, will acknowledge the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So we know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I’ll repeat that. When the member from Willowdale enters the chamber, I’d appreciate an acknowledgement of the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just throw him out. It would be easier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I’ll give you one warning. There’s fun and then there’s mockery. Don’t mock the Chair or you’ll be gone.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Take your seat.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What I want to say to the market fundamentalists—and we find many in the Tory caucus and in the Liberal caucus—is that they’ve got this all wrong. We have seen growth without jobs and we have seen growth without working men and women benefiting from that growth.

I want to refer to some of the stats on this file, but before I do and before I comment on some of the other stuff, I want to quote Bill Currie and Elliot Morris, who have done some research on the whole matter of investments. The idea is that when we cut corporate taxes, corporations will make investments in machinery and in R&D. We haven’t been seeing that in the last 15 years.

These two folks, Bill Currie and Elliot Morris—one is the vice-chairman of Deloitte Canada and the other is Deloitte’s American managing director, Elliot Morris; they’re senior consultants at Deloitte—they say, “In the survey, Canadian executives indicated that they are not planning to invest in the types of activities required to improve productivity. When we look at the actual decisions Canadian business leaders make about activities that bolster productivity, such as investing in R&D and commercializing innovation, Americans are 13% more tolerant of risk than Canadians,” according to that study.

They say, “Canadian business leaders’ aversion to risk is especially important because it underlies other critical contributors to our growing productivity gap, including a lack of risk capital for start-ups, chronic underinvestment in machinery and equipment, insufficient investment of private sector R&D and an unwillingness to engage in international markets.”

Now, this is stuff that ought to concern most of that Conservative caucus back here and the others, because that’s your argument. Your argument is: Cut corporate taxes, and they will invest. Right? The study that I just referred to you—these are your friends, by the way; I wish they were mine. They don’t give me any money. Your friends are saying, “It’s not happening.”

Now, you’re either listening to this, or reading it, or not. My suspicion is that you’d rather avoid those facts if it doesn’t fit your narrative. My point is the following—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is it time? Good heavens, we’re running out of time.

The corporate taxes this government is giving are going to the banks and the insurance companies: \$500 million going to the banks, \$130 million going to the insurance companies. These boys and women are making huge amounts of money in their salaries, over \$10 million each, some a bit less. How do you live with that kind of money and feel good? Where is the job creation?

Interjection: They fund these campaigns.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Other than the money that they get to help Tories and Liberals with these tax policies.

I am looking forward—because I’m running out of time, and my friends want to speak to this—to the debate

from the Liberals. I want to know where they stand on this today. It's going to be entertaining, I am sure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate this afternoon. The motion proposed by the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition reminds me of—I was doing a little research this afternoon. Back in 1957, Lionel Chevrier, who was then the opposition House leader for the Liberals in Ottawa, moved a motion on a particular matter. The Right Honourable Prime Minister John George Diefenbaker, who was born in Neustadt, Ontario, thundered—

Applause.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Some applause there for Neustadt. The Right Honourable John George Diefenbaker thundered a response: "Big game hunters are never fooled by little rabbit tracks."

Mr. Speaker, I'll take the opportunity to try to explain that to the members opposite. This is an interesting, well-couched motion, but what does it intend to do this afternoon? It is intended to reveal what our measures might be in the upcoming budget in late March.

1640

We all know that the principle of budget secrecy is still important to this Parliament and to all Legislatures across this country. Indeed, it's a very important principle that has always been followed by Ministers of Finance in Ottawa and provincial treasurers right across this great Dominion.

I want to reflect on some additional research, Mr. Speaker. It was about a Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain from 1945 to 1947. His name was Edward Hugh Neale Dalton. He was the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the Prime Minister of Great Britain, who was then Clement Attlee. I want to quote what happened in this particular instance about budget initiatives and budget secrecy.

"On 12 November 1947 the chancellor opened his fourth budget, seen as an emergency measure against inflation. Ironically, this final Dalton budget has come to be regarded as a pioneering initiative, which for the first time fully incorporated Keynesian principles, providing a model for the subsequent 'austerity' budgets of Sir Stafford Cripps. As it turned out," the Chancellor of the Exchequer "was not at the Treasury to see the effects of the new approach. Walking through the lobby on his way to deliver the budget speech, he was approached by a reporter on the London evening Star who stopped him and asked a question. The chancellor replied precisely, giving details of the main tax changes he was about to announce. The reporter immediately telephoned his editor, and copies of the Star containing the information in the stop-press section were" made available "before the chancellor had reached the relevant part of his speech. There was no movement on the stock exchange attributable to this leak, which the opposition accepted was no more than a regrettable accident. However, Dalton's position had been weakened over preceding

months. Some colleagues had come to regard him as a liability, and he had unwisely become involved in a Cripps-led manoeuvre aimed at persuading the Prime Minister to stand down. Dalton's offer of resignation was accepted, and his career as a front-line minister" in the Attlee government "came to an end."

The reason I reference this is, as I said in my opening, that this motion today is a very clever attempt to get some insight into our budget, which we plan to present toward the latter part of March.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, maybe he should take the opportunity to learn a bit of the history of this particular Chancellor of the Exchequer, because it's very informative.

In fact, over the last number of months, we're getting advice from all sectors. We're getting advice from the Drummond commission. We're getting advice from individuals that you and I meet, Mr. Speaker, in our constituency offices to provide us advice.

Interestingly enough, about four weeks ago at a round table town hall with Ian Howcroft and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, bringing together a wide variety of business interests in the Peterborough area, they told me that the number one problem in terms of manufacturing, particularly in Ontario and indeed in Quebec, was the rapid appreciation of the Canadian dollar that went from 63 cents in the early 1990s and rapidly appreciated to parity and above parity, which we've all witnessed over the last number of years.

What he clearly indicated to me, while he recognized that our government has made some changes on the corporate tax side, was that the real challenge for manufacturers was how to respond to a rapidly appreciating currency, an increase that they never, ever had to cope with before. In fact, in northern Ontario particularly, the challenge with the forestry industry has been the rapid appreciation of the Canadian dollar. Everybody who takes some time to drill down into the issues we're talking about will find out that that's been a particular challenge.

We've brought in some measures to try to address that through HST, through bringing about a more competitive tax structure in this province. But, you know, we'll provide a number of initiatives in the budget we'll present, traditionally in the last week of March, prior to the fiscal year-end.

Look, I recognize this motion for what it is. The opposition wants to get some insight—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears that the members of the official opposition are not listening to the speaker. We're hoping that you'll understand my warning—last warning. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for bringing back some order in the House.

As we've been doing since October 6, in the months leading up to the election and after the election and as we get ready to present the budget in March, we'll be consulting with a wide variety of people, as, Mr. Speaker, you'll be doing in your riding in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. In a minority Parliament, it's a great opportunity for all these good ideas that are generated by groups within one's constituency, or indeed on an individual basis, to come forward and to present all these ideas to the treasurer, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, and we'll take those all into consideration as we get ready to present our budget.

Indeed, we've introduced a number of programs to make our businesses more competitive. In eastern Ontario we have the eastern Ontario development fund, and I want to take an opportunity to talk about that for a moment this afternoon, because it fits into how we can make our manufacturers more competitive.

We've had some great success in the riding of Peterborough—some 12 companies, ranging from a multi-national corporation like Siemens, going to companies that were developed and nurtured right in Peterborough. I think of McCloskey Brothers, which builds trommels for the aggregate industry. They export right around the world.

I want to take the opportunity to talk about Flying Colours. Flying Colours is a great company. The EODF supported it—John Gillespie and his family. In fact, at the end of October, we were delighted to host the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, to visit the Peterborough airport, along with Premier McGuinty—the opportunity to look at what goes on at Flying Colours.

Mr. Speaker, just to let you know what Flying Colours does, it takes brand new executive jets from Bombardier in Montreal and it retrofits those jets to meet clients' needs. On that particular day when the Prime Minister and the Premier were both there—the Prime Minister came into Peterborough airport with his new Challenger aircraft and had all the entourage there with him, and we gave him a very warm and substantial Peterborough welcome on that beautiful fall day. What happens is, these jets arrive at Peterborough from Bombardier, and they're outfitted with the latest technology for clients right around the world. In fact, on that day when the Prime Minister and the Premier were there, we had four jets that were being retrofitted: two from India and two from China. This is a real opportunity for an Ontario company, a Canadian company, to develop business in two large emerging markets. They certainly indicated, both the Prime Minister and the Premier, on that particular day that the investments from the EODF in terms of acquiring the latest technology in order for them to achieve their productivity targets was the way to go.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up, but I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to chat on this motion this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to join the debate on this important motion today. It is so important because of the grim economic situation that Ontario is in, thanks to eight-plus years of the McGuinty government's out-of-control spending, lack of accountability and fiscal mismanagement. It's so bad, we have a \$16-billion deficit here in Ontario that's expected to go up to \$30 billion by 2017-18 if we don't take action now. In fact, Mr. Don Drummond, whose report was just released a week or so ago, said exactly that. He said, "Decisive, firm and early action is required to get off this slippery, and ultimately destructive, slope. At a time when the news is full of stories of countries around the world that have failed the fiscal test and slid into the ditch, to the enormous detriment of their citizens, Ontario must be different. It must be the best." Mr. Speaker, we in the PC Party agree.

1650

Of course, Don Drummond only had a mandate to deal with government spending, but that's only one half of the equation. The other half is, what do we need to do to rescue our economy and bring Ontario back to its rightful place as the job creation capital of Canada? These are serious issues that are growing ever more urgent by the day because we have international credit agencies like Moody's, like the Dominion Bond Rating Service, that are literally breathing down our necks, waiting and watching to see what the McGuinty government is going to do about this financial mess that we're in.

And what have we heard from the McGuinty government to date? Nothing, absolutely nothing. In fact, it's even worse than nothing because it now looks like they're going to backtrack on their previous promise to cut back corporate tax rates here in the province of Ontario.

Just going back a few years, the federal government proposed a few years ago to work with the province of Ontario to lower our corporate tax rates here in the province to get to a combined rate of 25%, the federal government's share being 15%, the Ontario government's share being 10%. This was something that the McGuinty government agreed to and started work on. But now, all signs point to the McGuinty government stalling on the final tax reductions from 11.5% to 10%. Why is this so important? Unlike what other speakers have said, it's not because we want to give corporations and their executives special privileges and breaks. It's because we all know it's one of the most important factors in determining where businesses are going to locate, along with other factors, including a skilled workforce, lack of regulation and red tape, and energy policies. Of course, we could speak about those; that's another motion for another day.

Obviously we want businesses to locate here in Ontario because our unemployment rate right now is so appalling. It currently stands at 8.1% and has been higher than the national average for over five years, thanks to this government. We currently have about 600,000

people in the province of Ontario who are unemployed, and they're looking for their government to help them. The fact is, nothing is happening, and we're not alone. Ontario is under intense competition with other jurisdictions in order to attract businesses. Other countries are looking to do the same thing.

Just last week, President Obama announced that he would be asking Congress to scrub the corporate tax code of dozens of loopholes and subsidies to reduce the top rate to 28%, down from 35%, while giving preferences to manufacturers that would set the maximum effective rate at 25%.

An article in the Guardian from February 2011 noted, "Over the last 20 years, corporation tax has increasingly been used as a weapon in the global battle to attract investment from footloose multinationals." Well, Mr. Speaker, the competition isn't just international; it's domestic as well. Both British Columbia and Alberta have provincial corporate tax rates set at 10%, and I don't think it's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't know if members have trouble listening. That's the second member that has walked in in the last three minutes and has not acknowledged the Chair. I don't know how many times I have to stand up and say it.

The overall process here—we're trying to bring decorum back to the House. This has been talked about with other Speakers and it's been a real challenge, to say the least, this week. I hope things improve, because we're certainly not happy with the way things are going right now.

Thank you.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, both British Columbia and Alberta have provincial corporate tax rates set at 10%, and I don't think it's any coincidence that they also have much lower rates of unemployment than does Ontario.

Low corporate tax rates are also important for existing businesses in Ontario because they can then invest more in things like machinery and equipment, particularly in high technology equipment and software. According to the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, in its report for 2011 entitled *Canada's Innovation Imperative*, it was stated that, "Tax reform in Canada will provide a boost to business investment, which in turn will improve our innovation and prosperity." That, Mr. Speaker, will help all Ontarians.

Now more than ever we need to continue with our planned corporate tax rate reductions. As recently as November 2011, Premier McGuinty knew that when he said, "These corporate tax cuts are in fact having an impact on the front lines. They will mean more jobs."

Well, Premier McGuinty, nothing has changed. Don't lose your nerve now. Too much is at stake. I urge all members of this House to vote for this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, let me begin first with the Liberal Party. I don't take issue with back-

tracking. I don't take issue with listening to the input of other parties. In fact, I respect that this party—I respect that my honourable colleagues are listening or heeding good advice. My concern is this: that when the party takes an irrational partisanship approach to an issue, when they remark at a suggestion and they say, "This is a job killer. This is a completely thoughtless idea," they ruin their own credibility. They ruin their own credibility when they take a pre-emptive approach to an idea which they're now supporting. So my question is, Mr. Speaker, can this party come down on a position? Can they take a stance? Can they have an opinion that they can stick to without backtracking again and again?

Mr. Drummond's report talks about cutting spending. It talks about cutting services. What does this mean? What does this really mean to the people of Ontario? This means that education is at risk. This means our child care is at risk. This means services like hospitals, care for our elders—these are at risk.

We all know that there are tough economic times. Why is it that when times are tough, we put all the pressure, we put all the burden on those families that need the most help? Why do we put the pressure, why do we put the burden of sacrifice during this tough or difficult economic time on working families, on those that are not the best off? Why can't we approach this problem in a more fair and equitable way?

Let's look at sharing the burden. And who can share the burden the best? It's corporations. Corporations are in the best position to share this burden.

Now, we're not talking about killing jobs here; we're talking about an effective strategy to create jobs. What's an effective strategy to create jobs? Let's look at the track record of what corporate tax rates have done in this province. The history is very clear: Corporate tax rates in Ontario have gone down consistently, have gone down over the track record of this province. But what has increased over the track record of this province? Unemployment rates. What else has happened? We have lost manufacturing jobs. So simply decreasing corporate tax rates has not increased jobs for Ontarians. Why would we continue on a path that simply does not work? It doesn't make sense.

Let's look at Manitoba's model. An honourable colleague mentioned that Manitoba has a zero per cent corporate tax rate. In fact, they don't have a zero per cent corporate tax rate; they have a zero per cent tax rate on small businesses. In Ontario, we have a 14% general corporate tax rate; we have a 5.5% tax rate on small businesses. Who creates jobs in Ontario? Who creates jobs in Canada? Small businesses. Now, if we had a focused approach to job creation, we would address small businesses and look at assisting them, assisting those who actually create jobs in Ontario, and not corporations who, when they receive corporate tax rates, what they do with that is increase their cash reserves. This evidence is very clear. It's very clear that if you increase or decrease corporate tax rates, corporations simply increase their reserves on hand. They increase the reserves that they

hold. That doesn't mean that they're going to create more jobs. So the solution here is not proceeding down a path that we've seen before that hasn't worked; the solution here is creating a new path, a path that really helps Ontarians.

We have to look at who we represent. As elected officials, we represent the people of Ontario, not the corporations of Ontario. We represent the people who are working in factories and offices, who are skilled tradespeople, who are working as skilled professionals. The people of Ontario deserve legislation which protects their interests, which protects their lives, not the lives and the livelihood of corporations.

1700

Now, we believe in rewarding corporations who exhibit good civic partnership, who exhibit good citizenship, who exhibit a commitment to improving Ontario. So if you invest in Ontario, if you invest in the infrastructure, if you create factories, if you produce jobs in Ontario, then you deserve a corporate tax rate. Let's tie; let's create an incentive; let's make it worthwhile for corporations to create jobs here. It simply doesn't make sense to give money without any guarantee. We've seen what has happened to Caterpillar in London. When you receive money without any guarantee, you look for another place where you can make more money. That doesn't create a better province. That doesn't create jobs in Ontario.

Now, as the gap widens between the rich and the poor, it's our job to ensure we create a more equitable province, and that doesn't mean assisting in this gap and assisting in it widening. We must recognize that the solution lies in creating a true mechanism for creating jobs in Ontario, and this increase in corporate tax giveaways will not present a solution that will help Ontario.

So I ask the Liberal Party to recall their previous words and to reflect on them, to reflect on their stance when the NDP presented a solid argument, a sound argument, that corporate tax rates in the face of an economic downturn, in the face of difficult times for families, were not the proper solution, and that they apologize for taking that stance and now admit that they're heeding the proper advice of our party, heeding the proper advice of the party committed to the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that anyone in the opposition can have a straight face today. Here is a party opposite—let me just go through the list—that was quite happy—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're killing me.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm not talking about you guys. I'm talking about the boys in blue and the girls in blue.

They were happy with a corporate tax rate 18% higher than the Liberal government's, Mr. Speaker. They supported, quite frankly, a business surtax on small business, which they were completely comfortable with. And, in

both cases, when we presented those tax cuts, what did the Tories do? They voted against lower taxes.

When we reduced corporate income tax over the last eight years by \$12 billion, what did the Tories do? They voted against lower taxes.

When we reduced property taxes for seniors by \$1 billion, what did the Tories do? The Tories voted against lower taxes for seniors.

When we worked with the auto sector and put \$4.8 billion with the federal Conservatives to save the auto sector and get 9,000 jobs and save 400,000, the Tories voted against the auto sector—again.

How do you stand up and give us lectures on economic development and have a credible plan? Really. You have a tweak on ratios, and you have a job freeze. Would you at least go talk to Mr. Flaherty, who actually understands economics?

Ever since Clement and Baird and Flaherty left, there's no one left in that caucus who can count.

This is just hysterical, Mr. Speaker: 90,000 low-income—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm sorry, Madam.

Ninety thousand low-income Ontarians: We took them off the tax roll. We eliminated all taxes for 90,000. What did the Tories do? They voted against lower taxes and no taxes for low-income people.

How you guys present—you will not raise taxes. The last budget you in government voted for, when you were last in power, was your last budget. You raised corporate income taxes. Your last time you had a chance to vote on this side of the House, you did the exact opposite of what you're talking about today: You voted to raise corporate and income taxes. Now what do some of the star-struck leaders over there to have say about that, Mr. Speaker?

The then finance minister pleaded with the House, saying, "Oh, my lord." But what we have done in this budget, as we said clearly, is to take a look at the difficult choices we faced here in Ontario because of the significant economic downturn. We have delayed some of the tax cuts for one year, which just helps in the total picture to meet the priorities we felt were most important for the people of Ontario.

That could have been the member for Thornhill, but no, it was Janet Ecker, our then Minister of Finance. What did Jim Flaherty, then the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, have to say about delaying and raising taxes? On June 19, 2002, he said, in defence of the delayed corporate income tax, "This was a year in which—like last year actually—in which there were some difficult decisions to be made." And if you think that all the birds have flown the coop, Mr. Speaker, and that none of the people who hold this point of view—let's quote the member for Oxford, who still sits in the front row over there: "I'm sure you are now all aware of our plan, introduced in the 2002 Ontario budget by the Minister of Finance"—Janet Ecker—"to delay by one year certain currently scheduled tax cuts.... These proposed delays are a prudent response"—prudent

response—"to Ontario's current fiscal economic situation...."

"There is a need to address the fiscal realities of today."

While you were in a global economic boom, you managed to create a \$5.6-billion deficit. Mr. Speaker, we have governed through the biggest global economic meltdown, when governments in Western Europe, previously stable, have now gone off the cliff. You have nothing to teach us. You should have a little humility, given your record.

I voted against the NDP motion. Why? Because what the NDP proposes is to increase corporate taxes in Ontario by \$9 billion. I agree with the leader of the third party: Part of the challenge right now is that our tax cuts have worked. This is what the Conservatives should learn from our friends in the NDP: Our corporations in Ontario have better cash reserves than they've probably had in 20 or 30 years.

Mr. Michael Prue: Exactly.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: "Absolutely," says the NDP finance critic, and I agree with him. Their solution in the NDP is to say, "This is a terrible thing. Let's take all the money back, because money is only best spent when it's in the public sector." So what are we doing?

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You two, you sit so close to each other. Do the blue guys and the orange guys ever talk? I mean, really, you should be better friends.

So what's happening in Ontario, Mr. Speaker? The—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friends in the NDP point out that in the United States the corporate tax rate is 10 points higher, and that's a problem because of what you don't want to talk about, which is the fact that there are trillions and trillions of US dollars stranded offshore. The US is trying to repatriate its own capital. The Conservatives, who should understand capital repatriation, can't even say it. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say the word "innovation" for the first time since I've sat in this House. We cannot have a high corporate tax rate because you'll end up with the US problem of unrepatriated capital.

Our challenge is innovation, Mr. Speaker. If you actually believed in innovation, why did you vote against the Ontario venture capital fund and our partnerships with Northleaf, which have put billions of dollars of risk capital? We need to recreate—risk capitalist problem. That's the challenge.

And how are we doing, Mr. Speaker? By working with your federal cousins, we have introduced the HST, which, Jim Flaherty and Prime Minister Harper have pointed out over and over and over again, has reduced the friction of investment in technology and has increased hiring. Let me just tell you a few things. Right now, as a result of the tax changes—and I want to commend Minister Flaherty, because what he did was he took off—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My dear friend from Hastings, etc.—

Laughter.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Northumberland—Quinte West.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Quinte West; I'm sorry. I mean, the one thing my friend, Lou Rinaldi, understood was that—and he was a big supporter of this—when you reduce the sales taxes domestically in concert with the federal government taking taxes off foreign-made assembled parts, you increase investment in capital. I was, as Minister of Research and Innovation, in your constituency not once, not twice but three times to see the effects of that in three new companies that opened and expanded, creating about 2,000 jobs at last count—in your constituency. And the member would vote against it, cutting his own constituents' throats when it comes to job creation.

1710

We have added 260,000 places to our colleges and universities; 60,000 new apprenticeships, growing by 30,000 per year. Why? Part of our economic policy, which isn't a one-trick pony, stupid tax cut—it's actually a little more sophisticated.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to have the most sophisticated, educated workforce in Ontario. They were happy with only half of Ontarians with an education. We have said "70%," and we're at 66%. We have a quarter of a million more Ontarians, when they apply to college, university or an apprenticeship, getting "yes." When they were in power, they got a "no." As a matter of fact, you didn't understand the innovation economy. You raised tuition 67% and cut our universities and colleges by half a billion. You almost dismantled it.

We have expanded colleges and universities and we have put in more incentives. We've put about a half a billion dollars, in partnership with the private sector, into risk capital for innovation. And what is the result of that, Mr. Speaker? The result of that, as my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville said, according to the federal government and the Kauffman report in the United States: We are one of the leading producers of what are called gazelles. These are 4.4% of all companies in Canada, which are producing over 40% of our jobs—40% of our jobs—which is about 321,000, the number they never talk about. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. It's extraordinary.

Now, let me leave you with a challenge before I sit down: Come up with some smart ideas. Stop the one-trick pony. You think a 1% difference in the corporate tax rate is an economic policy. I'm not going to vote for anything you guys come up with until one party opposite actually tables an economic development plan that is something a little bit more than laughable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to take this opportunity to address our leader's motion

calling on this government to continue with its planned reduction of the business tax rate to 10% by next year.

Coming from the private sector, I understand that businesses want and need clarity. Before businesses expand or look to new markets to invest and create jobs, they need to know that the long-term outlook in Ontario is stable. Part of that stability for businesses is ensuring the government won't unexpectedly raise taxes and put them at a competitive disadvantage with companies in other jurisdictions. But that is exactly what this government is about to do. Instead of implementing policies that will make Ontario one of the best places to invest, this government plans to do the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, cancelling a planned tax reduction is the same as increasing taxes, so it's time for the Premier to share with the majority in this place what that decision is.

There are nearly 600,000 Ontarians out of work today. We know that the last time this government hiked business taxes in 2004, the result was a staggering loss of 210,000 manufacturing jobs. What we in the PC caucus know is that a competitive corporate tax rate is the best way to help businesses in the short term and to create more jobs. Why? Because you attract investment with lower taxes, and when businesses pay less tax, they have more money to invest and create jobs here in Ontario.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are urging this government to stay the course on tax reforms in order to improve our competitive advantage and to once again make Ontario one of the best places to do business in Canada. But this government has simply responded with indifference as we continue to lag behind our competitors. The only people putting ideas on the table to turn things around in our province sit on this side of the House.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: The PC caucus is committed to constructive, pro-growth policies like apprenticeship reform, affordable energy, eliminating the red tape and pressing the government to move forward on the planned reduction of the corporate tax rate.

I believe, with the right leadership, Ontario once again can be one of the best places to invest in Canada. So I will be supporting job creators in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga and across Ontario by voting for this motion today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had to rush down here. We had our founding meeting of the estimates committee. I had to be there, so I missed some of the initial speakers, but I wanted to come and speak to this. I want to speak to this motion.

Every morning when I wake up I try to read a couple of newspapers and watch the CBC morning news to see what the markets are like around the world and try to keep on top of the whole financial sector. This morning, as I was watching the CBC news, the financial guru came on and was talking about how the Bank of Montreal had just posted its quarterly earnings of \$1.1 billion. Ordinarily, I would have thought: Well, here was a guy from

the financial sector saying, "What a wonderful thing." But then he looked into the camera and he asked all of the Canadians who were watching the program: "What is it exactly that the bank does to make this much money?"

He said, "I understand if it's a resource company. I even understand the oil company going out into Hibernia in all inclement weather, digging down, taking considerable risk to human life and everything else in order to find oil and reserves in order to make their money. I understand how they would want to do that."

He said, "But what is it exactly that the banks do for us? What is it exactly that makes it all well and good that they can make \$1.1 billion in a quarter—one single Canadian bank; not even the biggest one. What is it exactly they can do?" I thought, what a refreshing thing that was to watch on the CBC, because now people who are involved in the money market are starting to question all of this corporate greed. They're starting to question: What is it exactly they're doing to make this in excess of \$1-billion profit in a single quarter? We in the NDP have been thinking about this for awhile, but I was very surprised to see a kind of right-wing, conservative guy talking in this same language.

Over the past couple of weeks I've had the opportunity, in the absence of a working finance committee, to go to 10 towns and cities across Ontario and to speak with ordinary people about what they might want to see in the upcoming budget. Ordinarily that's done by the finance committee. I've had the opportunity in eight of the last 10 years to travel with the finance committee as we try to gauge public opinion about where taxes might be increased or decreased, where programs might be changed, the kinds of things that happen here every year at budget time. But in the absence, I had to go myself.

I met and had delegations of over 250 people in those 10 meetings, ordinary people who came forward with their ideas, their hopes and their dreams. I challenged each and every one of them in every meeting with the same three questions. I asked them first of all: "Tell me about the programs that you believe the government needs to continue and where changes in those programs might benefit ordinary people." The second question was: "What programs are no longer relevant? What programs do we not need to pay for and where can we save some money?" And the third one was: Somewhere in with all of this, we have to, as a government, come up and balance the books by 2017.

So there has to be a combination of some cuts of programs which are no longer relevant, if the public agrees with that. But also, we have to find other sources of revenue, just like every government has done for the last more than 100 years and every government that ever occupied this place has had to do—to look for those revenues.

I want to tell you, the ordinary people have a very balanced view of what needs to be done: 250 people came and made deputations with me and before me and all around me, and not one of them said that we should reduce corporate taxes. Not one out of 250 people agreed

with this motion that's being put forward by the Conservatives.

They came up with great ideas. They really want to protect our schools, colleges and universities. They really believe that our health care is something to be treasured. They are proud to be Ontarians and proud to be Canadians. They think that our health care is amongst the finest in the world and they don't want to tinker with it if it's going to be made worse.

They're worried about our environment and what the cost of cutting environmental services might be. They all remember Walkerton, and they don't want to go there.

1720

They talked in many places about transportation. They talked about the need for interconnecting cities and good roads, highways and railways, and they talked about not cutting out those things, because they rely on them to visit their friends or family or go to work.

What they did tell us was that there were ways to save money. Many, many of them talked about not spending as much money as we have in the past on acute care and hospitals, but to divert the money into long-term care or, even better still, keeping people in their own homes. They were very wise about this. They were talking about nurse practitioners. They were talking about having community health clinics. They were talking about the need to have birthing centres and midwifery. They knew all about this stuff.

Teachers and people came to us and said, "Don't cut our education. But if you have to find some money in education, don't take it from the classroom. If you need \$156 million that is only marginally being used, why don't you get rid of the EQAO?" And I have to question—all we do is we have teachers teach to the test, and then we have people run around and say, "My poor neighbourhood doesn't compete as well as the rich neighbourhood." You don't even need an EQAO to know who's going to be at the top of the list and who's going to be at the bottom. Everybody knows this. Even in my discussions with the finance minister, he knows in advance—as do all of you in your neighbourhood—which schools are going to be at the top and which ones are going to be at the bottom. The richer the neighbourhood, the higher up they are, and it has nothing to do with teachers teaching to the test. We don't need to spend \$156 million there.

They had talked about what do we need an Ontario Municipal Board for? Of all the useless institutions in this province, why do we spend money on such a useless thing? And then every single municipality has to hire lawyers and planners to go out and fight them when the developer—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Why not leave that authority with the municipality, like every other province? People are smart. They know you don't have to waste money, and that's another waste.

Where they were really smart was when I asked them, where are you going to find the money if you want to

maintain the programs that are dear to you? They came up with a whole bunch of things.

Of course, most of them agreed that we should cap the end of the corporate tax cuts; there should be no more. We're already lower than low. We don't need to go there. By stopping that, they said we would save between \$800 million and \$1 billion, and I agree with them. That's why I'm not voting for this motion.

They also talked about the health tax, the hated health levy that comes every year, and how that should be part of the income tax, because they think that people who earn a lot of money should be paying more; that it doesn't make much sense that somebody making \$25,000 or \$30,000, or whatever the cut-off is, pays half as much as somebody who earns \$1 million a year. They don't think that's fair, and they're absolutely right.

They talked about a Robin Hood tax, where people who go to the stock market and gamble on the stock market might have to pay a small percentage for the privilege of doing so, which would raise billions of dollars in and of itself.

They said that maybe some people might even be interested in paying a voluntary tax. I kind of scoffed at the idea until I opened up, again, the newspaper today here in Toronto to read that last year the city of Toronto asked for people to voluntarily give extra taxes, and they made \$1.2 million last year, and this year they expect to double or triple it, because people in this city understand you cannot cut out those taxes and still have the kind of services that we have come to demand.

So here we have it. We already have the lowest taxes in North America. We are lower than Mexico. We are lower than Guatemala. I take no umbrage against those countries, but I am saying, how low can we possibly go and still have the kinds of services that people expect?

In the past number of years, under this government, we have transferred some \$10 billion to the corporate sector from our own treasury. That's \$10 billion we don't have to spend. What has happened with this money? We now have a province where the corporations are sitting on \$477 billion in cash reserves. That is up 750% since 1995. In 16 years, they have increased their cash reserves to \$477 billion that are sitting there. What is happening with this money? I ask the members opposite, I ask my Conservative colleagues who put this forward, what is happening with it? Are they creating jobs with it? No. We know that the unemployment rate in some areas has actually gone up.

If you travel, as I did over these past few weeks, to places like Windsor and Sarnia, where the unemployment rate is at 11% and 12%—all of that cash reserve is going to nothing. It's going to line pockets. It's going offshore. If you go to London, you'll see that all of that cash reserve is going to Caterpillar, who picks up the plant and moves to Indiana. No jobs are being created, and no jobs will be created if we follow this motion. Nothing is going to happen except that people are going to get more wealthy than they already are, and that money is going to be moved into jurisdictions where the government cannot touch it.

You know, I think the time has come for ordinary people to speak out, as they did to me on the committee, for ordinary people to say that the rich and those who are well off and those who can need to pay some of their fair share. I know that when President Obama stood there at the State of the Union, he said nothing different from what I am saying here today. You have to question why the secretary of Warren Buffett pays the same tax rate as Warren Buffett himself. You have to ask why billionaires like Warren Buffett can say, "We ought to pay more. This is not fair, what's happening." You have to ask questions.

Even Rick Santorum, running for the Republican leadership, for the nomination, is saying that no more can we give corporations money without ironclad guarantees of jobs. Everybody is starting to talk that way. It's time this government did, and I cannot support a party that is putting forward a motion that's going to do diametrically the opposite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: You know, reducing the business tax rate to 10% is the same tax cut the Ontario Chamber of Commerce supported in 2009 during their pre-budget submission, to provide competitive business tax rates to kick-start the private sector economy. I quote: "A reduction in corporate tax rates [is] the most helpful initiative for helping businesses in the short term and improving long-term competitiveness."

And this from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters: Corporate tax reductions demonstrate "a strong correlation between reduced taxes, increased investment in machinery and equipment and, ultimately, job growth, an increased standard of living and increased quality of life." They go on to say that "lower corporate tax rates encourage businesses to spend more on research and development," and that they accelerate economic growth by creating jobs and boosting investment.

To put it all together, Speaker, "Higher levels of employment, business investment, and R&D spending lead to stronger GDP performance. All are positively related to increases in after-tax business profits"—again like the tax cuts.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? I recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Speaker.

This particular motion is another clear example of this government being untrustworthy. You know, to put this in context, our leader, Tim Hudak, is trying to make it clear about the jobs and the economy in Ontario. That is the biggest—we could talk about lots of other things, but really it's about jobs and the economy.

Now, what you need in investment to create the jobs isn't more public sector; what you need is the private sector to create wealth. The 600,000 people that are out there in those families without income are dependent on government, which increases your risks and your costs. What you need is a plan here for jobs and the economy,

and what this motion does is clarify for the investors around the world who may be looking at Ontario, perhaps even Samsung, to know the certainty of the tax regime within the province of Ontario.

1730

Now, if you look further back at the earlier budget, where this long-term implementation plan on corporate tax relief was introduced, there were phases when parts of it were to be introduced. Most businesses and investors would be looking at that timetable: When is a good time to invest, given the encumbrance of tax on their hopeful profits?

This is another example of Ontario backing away from their commitments. I'd call it blatant lying, but that's out of order and I understand that. Really, what it is is another broken promise. You know, if you pay attention to Premier McGuinty, he has no plan for the economy of Ontario. He has sold out every opportunity for our children.

I look at the pages here, with another week to go in the Legislature. We're all talking about your future, because this government is going to double the deficit to \$30 billion—Don Drummond said that—and the debt to \$400 million. What does this mean to the 600,000 people? A very bleak future.

I'm going to relinquish the floor, because I am so upset by this: another continuous kind of litany of broken promises, relentlessly on the people of Ontario, and no plan for the future except more taxes. So, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I support this. I urge the members of the government side to think clearly about the future of the children and the young people with no jobs. Think of the children. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've stood up already.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, come on, Speaker. Point of order—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Well, you know, I can't sit here and—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order: This is a game being played here. We know exactly what's going on. When you looked down, Mr. McNaughton was standing up.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Just for all the members in the House, I did call for further debate three times. Nobody stood up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Twice. Twice.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Three times.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll check Hansard.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Check it.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Are you challenging the Chair?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I am. It was twice.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to all members in the House, I did call for debate three times. Based on the arguments on both sides, I will do it one more time, and I will not entertain the games that are going on any more.

Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Just hang on until I recognize you.

The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me today and having the opportunity to speak to this Ontario PC motion for job creation in this tax relief measure.

You see, Speaker, as you know, I come from a family business, a business background in downtown Newbury. We've been in business for over 63 years. I'm a small-town Home Hardware Building Centre dealer, auto and farm supply store, and Rogers and LCBO agency store, all under one roof. I know about business and private sector jobs, because that's where I come from, and I know businesses need dependability and consistency for planning purposes.

This motion will reaffirm the Legislature's support for the planned and currently legislated corporate tax reductions that are scheduled to take effect on July 1 of this year, and that is something that I and my colleagues on this side of the House strongly support. You see, it is my goal, and indeed the goal of the Ontario PC Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, to make Ontario the best place to invest, the best place to do business and the best place to create jobs in the country.

You see, Speaker, businesses across the province—small and medium-sized businesses and corporations—are counting on these tax deductions. They've already been passed into law, and responsible corporations are now planning and counting on these reductions to continue to get the Ontario economy back on its feet and help the 600,000 men and women across the province who are out of work.

We believe in being fair, open and transparent on this side of the House. That's how I was raised, and that's how we do business. Government should do the same. I know that these across-the-board, broad-based corporate tax cuts are much better than picking and choosing certain items and applying tax credits here and there.

These broad-based corporate tax cuts are much better than the current corporate welfare system being used by the governing Liberals. In fact, in 2009 and 2010 this Dalton McGuinty government gave away \$3 billion in corporate welfare. If we want to make Ontario a leader again, we need to make it the best place in Canada to find permanent private sector jobs. Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus believe in strengthening Ontario's

economy by making it attractive for investment and private sector job creation.

The Ontario PC Party has always been committed to ensuring that businesses are able to compete and are able to help grow our economy. We need to create more jobs and create the conditions in which businesses in Ontario can survive and prosper.

To conclude, I want to raise the key message in this debate today. If we want to make Ontario a leader in Canada once again, we need to make it the best place in Canada to find good, permanent private sector jobs, something this government clearly does not understand.

Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus believe in strengthening Ontario's economy by making it attractive for investment and private sector job creation. I would encourage all members of the House to support our leader and our party in this motion today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is a mockery, Speaker. They didn't want a debate and now they want to debate? They've got to get with the program and grow up. They've made a mockery of debate in this House. We're debating a serious issue. They had no interest in standing in debate, trying to play some kind of childish game, and now they're interested in getting into debate. Shame on them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order in the House. Please sit down. I would let the member know that that's not a point of order.

The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion and participate in this important debate.

It's interesting that in Ontario we've gone through really tough economic times. And not only in Ontario; globally, we've gone through tough economic times. The recession in 2009 was a significant one. It was a global recession that impacted economies around the globe, not only just Canada and Ontario.

But when the recession hit Ontario, this McGuinty government took immediate action. We, as a government, did not shy away from ensuring that we were there to assist the growth of the Ontario economy, that we were there to ensure that there are opportunities, that Ontario is a competitive place to do business. Therefore, we brought in a very comprehensive strategy to create a plan, to create jobs and to grow the economy. We brought in a strategy, backed up by legislation, that looked at our whole tax infrastructure. We looked at our sales taxes, we looked at our personal income taxes, and we looked at our corporate taxes.

1740

Speaker, on the side of sales taxes, we took a very important—difficult but important—step of harmonizing GST and PST, making sure that our businesses have the advantage, as they have in other jurisdictions, in 140 jurisdictions around the world, in terms of having a value-added tax. That saved businesses more than \$500 million alone per year in paperwork. And that's just administrative savings, not to mention ensuring that businesses are able, especially small businesses, to take advantage of a value-added tax, which ensures that they can bring the cost of production down and be more competitive in the marketplace—the same principle as the GST when it was brought in at the federal level and other, Maritime, provinces that have also introduced harmonized sales taxes.

That was a very important step and a difficult one. It was something that was supported by all businesses, especially our small businesses in this province, making them more competitive, and a great boon for our manufacturing sector.

Speaker, where was the opposition? First, they were for it. They thought it was a good idea, and they then turned against it. They did everything in their power to ensure that the HST does not come into place in Ontario, that our businesses, especially small businesses, do not get the support they so very much deserve.

Now they're standing up and talking about creating opportunity for businesses. When they had the opportunity in 2009, they voted against it, every single one of them.

The same thing when we brought in significant relief in terms of personal taxes, where we reduced personal taxes to offset the impact of the HST on consumers: We brought in tax relief through cuts and credits for Ontarians worth \$12 billion over three years. Nine out of 10 taxpayers are paying less income tax in the province of Ontario, saving an average—an income tax cut of about \$355 this year alone. How did the opposition, Speaker—you will think that they supported that. No, they did not. They voted against that tax cut for hard-working Ontarians as well.

Now let's talk about corporate taxes, the subject of this particular motion. Through the same plan that we brought in—the plan for jobs and growth for Ontario—we not only brought in the harmonization of GST and PST to help our small businesses, we not only cut personal income taxes to help Ontarians, especially those low- to mid-income; we also reduced corporate income taxes. We brought in legislation that cut the small business corporate tax rate by 18%—a small business tax reduction by 18%—and eliminated the small business surtax. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada to eliminate this barrier to growth for our businesses.

We also reduced the manufacturing and processing corporate income tax rate to 10%. This includes forestry, farming, fishing and mining—a 17% cut, and also, at the end of the day, we eliminated the capital tax on all businesses.

Listening to the debate taking place today, you would farming, fishing and mining—a 17% cut. Also, at the end of the day, we eliminated the capital tax on all businesses.

Listening to the debate taking place today, you would think the opposition must have supported that particular measure. No, Speaker, they did not. They voted against the corporate tax cut. In fact, the vote took place in this House on May 27, 2009. May 27, 2009, the opposition, who brought this motion, voted against a significant cut in the corporate income tax rate for small businesses, eliminating the small business surtax, bringing the corporate tax rate on manufacturing and processing down to 10%.

And now they are talking about businesses. Where were they when businesses needed their help in 2009, to help grow our economy? Where was their defence for our small businesses, the engine of economic growth and jobs, back in 2009? That time, I think they chose to play politics. But thanks to the measures that we have brought in, we are seeing new jobs being created in our province every single day. We're seeing a net job gain in 2011 alone of 121,300 jobs that have been created since 2003.

Now, I understand that this is an opposition day motion. There's always some political game and mischief that goes along with it. What the opposition is trying to do is try to have a conversation on a budgetary measure through this motion. Here's a reason we will be voting against this motion: because it is an inappropriate subject to discuss during budget preparation.

Speaker, you know that developing a budget is a robust process. There are many different aspects to a budget, and you do not develop measures in a budget through an opposition day motion. You cannot just look at one element of the budget in isolation, as this motion is purporting to do; you have to examine it in an overall context. That's why it's really important that we do not vote in support of this motion, because it really takes away from the important work that is going on, both in terms of the consultation with Ontarians, far and wide—and we are all engaged in that process. We are talking to Ontarians, and we're listening to them as to what should be the priority; how we bring fiscal sustainability, moving forward, in these tough economic times; how we make sure that we are able to eliminate our deficit by 2017-18, as is the commitment by this government, and ensure that we've got job creation and economic growth. The government will listen to Ontarians across this great province, we will listen to their point of view. We'll take a balanced approach based on that and put forward a budget later in time.

We don't get to decide important aspects of the budget through debating motions like this one that has been put forward. So my urging to all members of this Legislature is to vote against this motion, because not only is it inappropriate to be brought in front of us here, but I also think it shows exactly the kind of political games—mischief, perhaps—the opposition is trying to play.

When there was the time to support a competitive corporate tax structure for the hard-working small busi-

nesses across this province, the opposition who sponsored this motion voted against that. When it came time to help hard-working Ontarians by lowering their personal income taxes, this opposition voted against that. When it came time to harmonize the GST and PST to create a modern sales tax system in the province of Ontario that gives our small businesses a competitive advantage, this opposition voted against it. Now they're coming and talking about the job creators of this province.

This government has always been on the side of small businesses, this government has always been on the side of businesses, and we'll continue to do so, Speaker, so that we're creating good jobs. We'll continue to invest in health care and education so that we'll have a highly skilled job force.

I urge all the members of this Legislature to vote against this motion so that we can continue with the budget process and bring a budget that will bring fiscal sustainability, grow our economy and create new jobs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Please sit down.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 1. Shall the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would members take their seats, please.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 1. All those in favour, please stand one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie

Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takharr, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 64.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion defeated.

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If there's no further business of the House, this House stands adjourned until 9 p.m. tomorrow—a.m., not p.m. Somebody told me they wanted to work late.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 29 February 2012 / Mercredi 29 février 2012

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012, Bill 34, Mrs. Meilleur / Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des tribunaux, des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires, projet de loi 34, Mme Meilleur

Mr. John Yakabuski	731
Mr. Michael Prue	738
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	739
Mr. Rob Leone	739
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	739
Mr. John Yakabuski	739
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	740

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	740
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	740
Mr. Frank Klees	740
Mr. Michael Coteau	740
Ms. Sylvia Jones	740
Mr. John O'Toole.....	740
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	740
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	740
Mr. Frank Klees	740
Mrs. Laura Albanese	740
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	740
Mr. Monte McNaughton	740

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Peter Shurman	740
Hon. Dwight Duncan	741

Taxation

Mr. Peter Shurman	741
Hon. Dwight Duncan	741

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	742
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	742

Air ambulance service

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	743
Hon. Deborah Matthews	743

Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees	744
Hon. Deborah Matthews	744

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	744
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	744

Anti-bullying initiatives

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	745
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	745

Air ambulance service

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	745
Hon. Deborah Matthews	745

Child care

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	746
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	746

Health care

Mr. Bob Delaney	746
Hon. Deborah Matthews	746

Air ambulance service

Mr. John O'Toole.....	747
Hon. Deborah Matthews	747

Workplace safety

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	747
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	747
Mme France Gélinas	748
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	748

Justice system

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	748
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	748

Long-term care

Mr. John Yakabuski	749
Hon. Deborah Matthews	749

Occupational health and safety

Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	749
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	749

Air quality

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	750
Hon. James J. Bradley	750

Correction of record

Mr. John O'Toole.....	750
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Continued on inside back cover

Continued from back cover

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	750
Mr. John O'Toole.....	750
Ms. Soo Wong.....	751
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	751

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Green power generation	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	751
New Choices program	
Miss Monique Taylor.....	751
Agincourt Collegiate Institute	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	751
Automotive industry	
Mr. Rod Jackson	752
Temiskaming Nordic Ski Club	
Mr. John Vanthof	752
AUTO21	
Mrs. Teresa Piruzza.....	752
International Rare Disease Day	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	752
National Brain Awareness Month	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	753
Barrhaven Food Cupboard	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	753

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Anti-bullying initiatives	
Hon. Eric Hoskins	753
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	754
Miss Monique Taylor.....	755

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Rural schools	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	756

Diagnostic services	
Mme France Gélinas	756
Education funding	
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	756
Wind turbines	
Mr. Todd Smith.....	756
Dog ownership	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	757
Environmental protection	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	757
Kidney disease	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	757
Long-term care	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	757
School accommodation	
Mr. Toby Barrett	758
Skilled trades	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	758
Kidney disease	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	758
Wind turbines	
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	758
Dog ownership	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	759

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Taxation	
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	759
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	761
Mr. Bob Delaney	762
Mr. Peter Shurman	764
Mr. Rosario Marchese	764
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	766
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	767
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	768
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	769
Mr. Michael Harris.....	770
Mr. Michael Prue	771
Mr. Toby Barrett	773
Mr. John O'Toole.....	773
Mr. Monte McNaughton	774
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	774
Motion negated	776