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Monday 4 April 2011

Lundi 4 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 avril 2011

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce to the House the guests of Daniel Mateus, who is our page from St. Catharines: mother, Liliانا Mateus; father, Carolipo Mateus; sister Sarah Mateus; and friends Miriam Vasen and Karl Navarro. They are in the gallery, or they are going to be in the gallery sometime today. Welcome.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to introduce the parents of page Sydney O'Brien, whose family is visiting us from my riding. Pat O'Brien and his wife, Kristine O'Brien, are pleased to have their daughter as a page. I believe that Sharon O'Brien, the grandmother, is also here, along with Sandy Wheller, who is an aunt. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to introduce my good friend Dr. Susan Tamblyn of Stratford. I introduce her on behalf of my colleague the member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Dr. Tamblyn is a leading world expert when it comes to public health. She's a former medical officer of health for Perth county, and she currently serves our province as the co-chair of the Ontario pandemic influenza health steering committee and is chair of the antivirals working group for the national pandemic influenza committee. Welcome, Susan.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I ask for unanimous consent to wear the daffodil pin for Cancer Month in April.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to introduce members from the Canadian Diabetes Association up in this gallery. They'll be meeting with different people today, and from 12 to 1 they have a reception in committee room 2.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Thirunavukkarasu, who are the parents of my legislative assistant. They came to Canada from Sri Lanka just a few years ago, and their son, who works on our staff, just finished his accounting degree at Ryerson and is on his way to be a CA within a decade. I think that's the extraordinary Canadian story being played out again. I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Dave Levac: Today at Queen's Park many of us are being visited by members from ACTRA to talk about issues pertaining to their profession. Today I was able to meet with people—Sesame Street, Little Mosque on the Prairie etc. Anyway, they're here to talk to the Legislature about some very serious issues. I'd like to welcome all of those fine actors and actresses from our profession here in Ontario. We welcome them today at Queen's Park and we thank them for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Last week's budget basically showed that you've thrown up your hands and that you've given up on trying to fix the incredible mess you've made with your reckless, run-away government spending. In fact, on page 71 of your budget, you announced that you've hired a Bay Street banker, Don Drummond, to fix the mess for you.

I ask you, Premier: When you gave direction to your Bay Street banker, which taxes have you asked your hand-picked Bay Street banker to look at to increase in the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question from my honourable colleague. I would encourage him to speak with the member for Durham, a representative in his party, who said this about Mr. Drummond: "Some of the leaders on this forum are quite distinguished, of no partisan affiliation, in our communities. I'm going to mention one of them: Don Drummond, who's ... one of the most respected economists when we look at budget day here in Ontario. Who do we look to when we want an objective, informed opinion? We look to Don Drummond."

I recommend that to my honourable colleague

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I wonder when it was that Don Drummond was elected to the Legislature and put in the McGuinty cabinet.

Basically, Premier, you have put our province into receivership, and you've hired a Bay Street banker to be our chief restructuring officer. We believe that you're considering a one- or two-point increase to the HST, and we wonder if your Bay Street banker is going to bring that forward. Basically, you have handed over the keys to cabinet office to a Bay Street banker, the very same

banker who recommended the HST tax grab that has taken money out of Ontario families' pockets.

Premier, please be direct: Are tax increases on the table for your Bay Street banker, or will you simply recommend cuts to health care and education?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would argue that Ontarians do have some real concerns. For example, last week, through our budget, we announced an \$8.4-billion investment in Toronto transit. Ontarians want to understand whether they're going to put a cut to the HST ahead of the investment that we're making in public transit in the city of Toronto.

This morning I spoke with Ontario farmers. They're very drawn to and very supportive of our new risk management program. Again, they want to know whether the party opposite is going to put a cut to the HST ahead of their brand new risk management program.

I say to my honourable colleague opposite: A party without a plan is a party that won't take a stand. The people of Ontario are becoming ever more interested in exactly what is happening inside that party over there.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, Ontario families want to know: Where are you going to get the money for your reckless increase in government spending? Are you going to increase—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable members that it is important that—stop the clock, please. For question period, I find that a number of the interjections are not helpful to maintaining decorum in this chamber. I'd just ask members to be cognizant of that.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, clearly you're going to increase the HST by a point or two. You're going to bring in the carbon tax. Families just want you to be honest and tell them what new tax increase you have planned today.

Premier, the problem is that you have ducked any kind of leadership of getting your spending under control. You have now contracted that out to a Bay Street banker to make the decisions that you could not make. And when asked by the Globe and Mail if cuts to health care and education by the McGuinty Liberals were on the table, Mr. Drummond said they absolutely were.

1040

Premier, do you agree with your hand-picked Bay Street banker who says he absolutely has to consider that the Liberal government will cut health care and education? What exactly is on the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's all spelled out very clearly inside our budget document. It's all spelled out in our plan that we've been putting forward, in front of the people of Ontario, for eight years now. For example, on page 71 of the Ontario budget, "The commission will not make recommendations that would increase taxes or lead to the privatization of health care or education." I think it's there in black and white.

Our concern is that in the absence of a plan, the only thing we can do is draw on history when it comes to the plan that the party opposite would put forward. That means that they plan to make cuts to health care. They would cut it by \$3 billion; they don't support the Ontario health premium. They've called full-day kindergarten a frill; they are not champions of full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. We know that they want to return to firing up coal-fired plants in Ontario as well. Again, until that party puts forward a solid plan, all we can do is infer what they will do based on their history.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: On one hand, you say that the Liberals will not cut health care, but the very next day, your hand-picked Bay Street banker says that he will recommend that the Liberals absolutely cut health care and education. So who, exactly, is running the show? Is it Mr. Drummond, your hand-picked Bay Street banker? Is it your cabinet? You say one thing one day and you say the opposite the next—a sad reality when it comes to the Liberal government.

Premier, your friend Mr. Drummond recommended in the past that we bring in the HST. You did so—a big tax increase on families. Now Mr. Drummond is recommending that the Liberal government cut health care and education. So is that mandate on the table? Is it not? Who's telling the truth? Is it you or is it your hand-picked Bay Street banker, Mr. Drummond?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was going to say that I don't get to advise my honourable colleague opposite, but I would suggest to him that of all the trees he might bark up, this is the wrong one.

He's trying to convince Ontarians that we're going to cut their health care; he's trying to convince Ontarians that we're going to cut their education. Let's just for a moment consider the record. Ninety-four per cent of Ontarians now have a family doctor. We're building 18 new hospitals; they closed them. We've hired 11,000 nurses; I think they fired 6,300. We have 200 family health teams, and we now have the shortest wait times in the country.

When it comes to education, I think we have 10,000 more teachers, class sizes are down, test scores are up, graduation rates are up and we're creating 260,000 more spaces in our colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

Again, I say with respect to my honourable colleague: He's barking up the wrong tree.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the reality is that you have now put the Bay Street banker Mr. Drummond in charge of the purse strings. You have promised to rein in spending; you have failed to do so. You said you would achieve a public service wage freeze; you've failed. You said you would free up resources by streamlining agen-

cies; you've failed. While the economy has grown by 9%, government spending under Premier McGuinty has gone up not 7%, not 17%, but 77%, more than eight times the growth rate of the economy.

You've lost control when it comes to government spending; you've handed it off to a Bay Street banker to make the decisions. You say that health cuts are off the table; Mr. Drummond says the McGuinty Liberals are going to cut health and education. Which will it be? Ontario families know they can't believe a word this Premier says.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Education will please come to order. It's quite obvious that everyone had an enjoyable weekend. Premier?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Except for Norm, of course. He didn't have a good weekend.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Consumer Services, I just sat down, and the moment I sat down, you interjected. Your interjection was actually interrupting your Premier.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it was President Bill Clinton who once said that you'd have to be out of your mind to want to be led by a pessimist. I have a very optimistic view of the future and everything that Ontarians are doing together to secure a bright future.

My friend is having some fun with math. Here are some real numbers. Just last Friday, we created another 750 new jobs by partnering with business in Ontario. There are 80 new jobs in Mississauga at Pratt and Whitney, 100 new jobs in Ottawa at Best Theratronics, 50 new jobs in Vaughan at Sungrow Canada, 40 new jobs in Belleville at Kellogg Canada, and five new jobs that involve increasing flight service in Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding First Nations communities at Eagle Feather Aviation.

I believe the people of Ontario are inherently hopeful and optimistic. They want a positive plan about how we can keep working together to secure a bright future for our children. That's what we're doing on this side of the House—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, what I hear is that people across Ontario—mums and dads, seniors and students—want to see change in our province that will give them relief and treat them with the respect they deserve.

Premier, Mr. Drummond, the Bay Street banker, is your guy. He's your hand-picked man. Your hand-picked Bay Street banker said that the McGuinty Liberals were considering cuts to health care and education. We know that the same Bay Street banker previously recommended that the McGuinty government bring in an HST tax grab, and you did so. He seems to have your ear, and now, because of your decision in your budget, you have given him the keys to the cabinet office. We actually have plans to involve MPPs, our elected members, to review the

waste in agencies, boards and commissions. You gave it over to a Bay Street banker.

Premier, won't you come clean? What is on the table with Mr. Drummond? Is it an increase in his favourite tax, the HST, or cuts to—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says he wants to involve his MPPs, but apparently not all of them. There was a considerable change made just recently.

I think Ontarians can take some considerable comfort in reviewing our record and, specifically, what we've done to improve the quality of public services, especially public education, public health care, protection of our environment, the partnerships that we've entered into with the private sector to create more jobs, the reforms that we're bringing to taxes, the fact that we are rebuilding our electricity system—something that is absolutely essential to do to secure that bright future.

I think that if there are lingering concerns or outstanding fears, they're concerned about the cuts that the party opposite wants to make to health care, they're concerned about them shutting down full-day kindergarten in Ontario, and they're concerned about their cuts to environmental protection—the kinds of things that we worked so hard together with the people of Ontario to shore up, to inspire confidence in, over the course of eight years.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The annual sunshine list was released last week, and once again Ontarians saw health care executives receiving half-million-dollar-plus salaries. When will the McGuinty government finally take real measures to rein in these excessive executive CEO pay packages?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll speak to this at the highest level, and then my colleague may want to speak to some of this.

The leader of the NDP knows that we have made a number of important announcements in the budget to help us manage our expenditures, including the fact that we have committed to cutting by 10% executive offices in major agencies and our transfer partners. I think that is a real and meaningful way to get at an issue which, I agree with my honourable colleague, is a real concern. We've got to make sure we are managing those costs. We've got to make sure that, especially when it comes to health care, those dollars get down to the front lines as much as we possibly can. I would recommend that particular initiative to my honourable colleague, and I would ask for her support there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's efforts to rein in public sector executive salaries are completely inadequate, if not utterly laughable.

When front-line health care workers are losing their jobs, how can the Premier justify the fact that a consum-

mate Liberal insider like Credit Valley Hospital CEO Michelle DiEmanuele went from making \$410,000 to more than \$450,000?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We welcome transparency. We welcome accountability. We believe that Ontarians have the right to know where their taxpayers' dollars are going. That's why we're taking the steps we have taken to make our hospital leaders more accountable. In fact, under the recent excellent care for all initiative, a portion of the hospitals' compensation will be tied to quality indicators. We think it's important that there are ways we can measure leadership, and that their compensation be tied to that.

As the Premier said in our recent budget, we've gone even further. Over the next two years, we are reducing by 10% the amount of money spent in those executive offices. We think that the more money we can move to front-line care, the better we—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's efforts have been a miserable failure so far, from what we can tell.

I'll tell you what New Democrats believe: We believe that there should be a hard cap on public sector executive salaries, plain and simple, to prevent the abuses that we continue to see, notwithstanding what this minister's comments are. As an example, former Deputy Health Minister Ron Sapsford was paid \$673,000 in salary and \$89,000 in benefits in 2010, even though he resigned from the provincial government in November 2009.

What exactly was Mr. Sapsford paid three quarters of a million dollars for in 2010? Was it a golden handshake that the Premier was hoping nobody would notice?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say, I regret the cynicism that is so apparent in the question from the leader of the third party. We are absolutely committed to getting better value for our taxpayer dollars when it comes to health care, and we have the results to demonstrate that we are getting better health care for people.

One of the things that we are doing is that we are tying the hospitals to accountability agreements. Our LHINs, our local health integration networks, have an agreement with every single hospital in this province to achieve certain results within a certain budget. The results are that, taken as a whole, our hospitals are on budget or have a plan to get there.

There was a day when hospitals ran wild deficits—

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

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Unfortunately for Ontario families being squeezed for every last nickel and dime, the sweetheart deals cut by the McGuinty Liberal government know no bounds. The notorious former eHealth boss Sarah

Kramer, who was fired in 2009, still managed to rake in \$107,000 in 2010. How is that appropriate?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of all the parties in this Legislature, I would expect that the NDP would be the party that would say that we should honour existing contracts. That is exactly what we see reflected in the sunshine list.

This is an annual affair around here when the sunshine list comes out, and members of the opposition—and I have to confess, we ourselves look very closely at the sunshine list to understand some of those numbers. The fact is that when some people leave employment, there is an agreement. We honour and respect those agreements.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is that there doesn't seem to be anybody minding the store over there. A former Waterloo hospital CEO got \$750,000 in severance. Another in Cambridge got \$650,000 on his way out the door. In Niagara, they still don't know how much their ousted CEO is going to get.

New Democrats would protect the interests of Ontarians by making sure that these backroom sweetheart deals are a thing of the past. In fact, I'm going to be introducing a bill this week requiring public sector employers to disclose severance payments that are more than \$100,000. Are the Premier and his caucus going to support this bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Like the member opposite, we are committed to getting best value for taxpayer dollars when it comes to health care. I'm enormously proud of the results that people working in health care have achieved for the people who rely on them for care. We now have 94% of Ontarians with access to primary care. That is an increase of over a million people more than when we were elected.

We've been able to work very hard to bring down wait times so that people are waiting far less than they did under the previous government when it comes to procedures like hip replacement, knee replacement, cancer care, cardiac care, cataract surgery. Those wait times are down. We've made a meaningful difference for people when it comes to health care in this province.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the people who—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What is happening under this government's watch is, quite frankly, offensive. As vital health services and front-line staff are slashed in communities across Ontario, health care executives, on and off the job, are cashing in.

New Democrats want to rein in these excessive compensation packages and sweetheart severance deals. Will the government support us on this or will they continue to look the other way while Ontarians are taken for a ride by well-connected health care insiders?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just think it's time, especially on an issue that is as important as health care, that we actually have some facts on the table. The member opposite talks about slashing and burning. Let me just tell

you what's happening in Hamilton when it comes to jobs. At Hamilton Health Sciences there are 20 more doctors working and 68 more nurses working; at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, 10 more doctors and 32—I'm sorry; these are the numbers of doctors and nurses on the sunshine list. Twenty doctors, 68 nurses at Hamilton Health Sciences; at St. Joe's, 10 doctors, 32 nurses.

The sunshine list has changed over time as inflation has increased the number of people. We're seeing our front-line health care workers on those sunshine lists. I tell you: I wonder what the member opposite would do. Does she want to cut the salary of nurses?

HOME CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Today the Ontario Health Coalition is releasing a new report that confirms what the Ontario PCs have been saying all along. Ontario's home care system is too bureaucratic and too much money is being diverted from front-line patient care to level upon level of bureaucracy. In fact, the report notes that home care dollars are transferred through four levels of bureaucracy before reaching the front lines. And now you've appointed a Bay Street banker to review health spending, adding a fifth level.

Do you think five levels of bureaucracy is too much, too little or just right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that everyone wants to see as much of our health care dollars going to front-line health care, and that is why we are working very hard to actually shift spending to the front lines. What we have done in the last budget is reduce executive office spending by 10% over two years. That money will all go to the front lines.

When it comes to home care, I have to tell you that it's kind of astonishing to me that the party opposite would be criticizing our record on home care, given that 200,000 more people are receiving home care now than under their watch. More people are receiving home care; more people are receiving care to help them stay at home, to help them come home from the hospital in a safe environment. We have increased spending tremendously when it comes to home care, and I'm proud of our record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact is that one of the five levels that stand in the way of money going to front-line health care is your unelected, unaccountable local health integration networks. Over \$250 million have been wasted at the LHINs alone. That's money that should have been spent caring for our loved ones at home, where they want to be. Instead, you use the money to pay the high-priced salaries of your LHIN executives. Will you finally take our advice, close the door on the LHINs and invest the money into front-line patient care, or are you so out of touch with Ontario families that you just don't get it anymore?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite might want to read an article that was published in the

London Free Press over the weekend by Gerry Macartney, who is the chief executive of the London Chamber of Commerce. Gerry Macartney says, "It's not often I find myself changing my position on an issue, but as new information and more detail become available, even an old policy wonk like me can be persuaded. Such is the case with the local health integrated networks...."

Gerry Macartney concludes his article by saying, "Are LHINs good for us? So far, pimples and all, they are a darn sight better than what we had, they are a lot more transparent and accountable than what we had, they seem to be producing the desired results and so far, I have heard of no one offering a better solution or a return to what was there before." So that's the answer—

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

1100

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Ontario households are struggling to pay their soaring utility bills. Enbridge and Union Gas go door to door to help families wrap pipes, insulate attics and seal cracks.

With increased funding, conservation programs could help Ontarians save almost a billion dollars over the next six years. Why is your minister allowing the OEB to freeze funding for these money-saving programs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. My honourable colleague will know that we've in fact made tremendous efforts when it comes to demand-side management, encouraging Ontarians to adopt conservation practices. We have a number of programs in place.

For an objective perspective, there's an organization, whose name now escapes me, which recently assessed us as having gone from, I think it was, a D minus to an A or an A plus when it comes to Ontario as a whole and our conservation efforts. We in fact have come a very long way.

I would encourage Ontarians to continue to be informed by the sentiment, I think earnestly expressed by my colleague opposite, that all of us need to find ways, every day in terms of how we lead our lives, where it's possible for us to make investments to adopt conservation practices.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Freezing a program is a strange way to show support for it. Last July, your energy minister said he would "support efforts by the OEB to expand" conservation efforts. The OEB staff agreed that increased spending on conservation programs would lead to real savings on gas bills, but the OEB has refused to increase funding for conservation, a decision that this minister says he now supports.

Why won't this government order the OEB to expand energy-efficient funding and help more families reduce their gas bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It was the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance that gave Ontario an A plus for energy conservation in 2009, up from a C minus in 2004.

Again, I hear what my colleague is saying, but I'm finding it hard to reconcile with the position that they have taken in opposition to time-of-use meters, which enable families, businesses and farmers to adopt better environmental practices. It's the kind of technology that's being adopted all around the world. It's one of those things that enables Ontarians, especially families—with the new change in our time-of-use times, so that the discount period will kick in at 7 o'clock in the evening as opposed to 9 o'clock, it's going to be much more practical and simple for families to adopt more energy conservation practices.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, climate change is something every government must deal with, and Ontario is no exception. The McGuinty government has already made great progress by shutting down dirty, coal-fired plants. I'm proud to say that in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, wind, solar and bioenergy are playing a big role in cleaning up our air.

But there are still concerns about our government's approach to renewable energies. On Saturday, a protest rally marched to my office in Strathroy to ensure that I heard those concerns. The majority of them came from other parts of Ontario, but I was pleased to meet with all of them.

They are very concerned about the scientific rigour behind our regulations for wind turbines. I made a commitment to those at the protest that I would bring their concerns to this assembly. Minister, has your ministry received any scientific evidence that wind turbines harm people's health?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. Let's be clear: The answer to that question is no. We undertook a rigorous and thorough study when we developed our regulations. That's why we have legislated in the province of Ontario a 550-metre setback, which is the toughest in North America.

The Superior Court recently upheld all of our provisions, agreeing that we had reviewed and based them on peer-reviewed science and expert opinions. Dr. Hazel Lynn acknowledges in her recent report that windmills are "not that bothersome to most people" who hear or live near them. We even reviewed every report given to us by the Society for Wind Vigilance from their recent symposium. Not one report contained new peer-reviewed science about health effects that we had not already considered.

We received a mandate from the people of Ontario to close coal-fired and replace—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know my constituents who are supportive of renewable energy will be glad to hear that wind turbines are safe.

Some residents, however, are equally concerned about repeated musings by members of the party opposite about

maintaining our use of coal. Ralph Ferguson, a former federal Minister of Agriculture, did a study in the Brooke-Alvinston area of my riding that clearly demonstrated the impact of dirty air on the high incidence of respiratory disorders and cancer rates in that community. Residents are willing to do their part to clean the air, but they want to know that the government is there as well.

My question to the minister is quite simple: With many Tories still supporting coal-fired generation, will the McGuinty government continue to increase renewable energy so that we can eliminate coal from our energy mix and improve the environment of my constituents?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Our commitment to renewable energy and conservation is stronger today than it has ever been. Why? Because we have the facts on our side.

Coal plants emit lead, mercury, dioxins, chromium, arsenic, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. They are the number one reason that the children of Ontario are admitted to emergency rooms. We know that as a scientific fact. The Ontario Medical Association tells us that 150 of our fellow citizens die needlessly because of coal-fired generation, and that's why we stand with the registered nurses of Ontario, with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, with the Ontario coalition of family physicians, with the asthma society, with the lung society and with the lung association: because we know that the dirty love affair that the members opposite have with coal—those days are coming—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Premier McGuinty, you keep wasting and spending taxpayer resources while the Ontario PC caucus has a committed plan to cut wasteful spending. Two weeks ago, the Ontario PC leader introduced his sunset review bill that would keep programs that work, fix the ones that need fixing, and take those programs that are beyond repair and put those resources back into front-line health care and relief for families.

You rejected our good plan when it was tabled. A week later you hastily assembled your own plan, led by a Bay Street banker who says you approached him just two days earlier. The question: How can we take you seriously, and why are you treating spending restraint like a public relations scheme instead of fixing the programs for Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, but I think maybe I missed something; maybe there should be a news flash; something should go onto the wire right away. There's a reference to some kind of a plan that they put out, and that's the first I hear of it here.

But here's what I do know: I do know that a very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past. This is a party that's absolutely committed to getting rid of the Ontario health premium. That's \$3 billion that would come out of our health care system. That would

result in the loss of thousands of nurses, hospital closures, and longer wait times. This is also a party that is committed to the shutdown of full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. That will stand to the detraction of some 247,000 four- and five-year-old children.

Again, we have a plan. It's a solid plan. We've been acting on the plan. We'd like to ask: Where's their plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In case he has missed something, here's the news flash: He has closed hospital ERs, he has shut down schools and he has raised our taxes, so if you want to talk about best predictors of the future, we'll look at your past and that's what we'll talk about, because you have no ideas of your own to get this spending in this province under control. You've given up trying, so you contracted out the job to a Bay Street lawyer who came up with the HST that you're forcing Ontario families to pay. But this wasn't, of course, before you looked over the shoulder of Tim Hudak and cribbed the notes for how to reduce spending in this province and get front-line care back on track. But even then, the issue that you're putting forward is half-baked, with a half-baked measure.

1110

The question is: Why should Ontario families trust Bay Street bankers accountable to the Premier to do a better job of protecting front-line health care when MPPs in this chamber—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd like to say that their plan is half-baked, but it's not even half-baked. I don't think it's a quarter baked or an eighth baked, for that matter; I don't think it's been put into the oven yet.

The question that we need to ask ourselves is: What is it that the PCs of Ontario are so afraid of sharing with the people of Ontario? Why won't they come clean with their specifics? It's simply because they want to reduce the HST. For every point that we take out of that, that's \$3 billion. That will result in cuts to our health care, closures to hospitals, loss of nurses, loss of teachers, closure of schools and a general deterioration of the quality of public services which we are so committed to. That's why they don't want to talk about the specifics of their plan.

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: ACTRA joins us at the Legislature today. They're looking for protection of the economic and bargaining rights of Ontario artists. In December 2010, my private member's bill would have delivered those protections. It passed second reading, but it has sat idle in committee since then.

Can the government tell ACTRA if they will support this bill's movement through the Legislature?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me begin by saying how much we value the outstanding contributions brought to us by the members of the film and acting industry. They employed over 304,000 Ontarians in 2010, and that's a 15% increase from last year.

I look forward to meeting with the members from ACTRA this afternoon in my office. I know they're here. They themselves have reinforced that they've turned the corner. The tax incentives that we've provided for them have provided tremendous incentive for the film industry. That's why, in Ontario, we are number one when it comes to being the film industry in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I haven't heard such unbridled enthusiasm in ages. But "ages" is a relative term. In 2007, the McGuinty government made a commitment to move forward on these issues of vital importance. Yet four years later, artists only have a symbolic day that does nothing to ensure the economic and employment rights of artists.

Artists need more than tokens of thanks; they need real protection. Why is your government dragging its feet on these issues?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear: All of our film industry employees do have protection within our industry. They have opportunities to go before the courts—I know, through the collective agreements, they're there—but more importantly, our tax credits, like the Ontario production service tax credit. Some \$155 million was introduced to maintain the competitiveness of the industry, including tax credits for film and television, and the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit of \$25 million.

The health and safety of paid performers of any age while working is protected under the Ontario health and safety act, and that includes health and safety protection and adult supervision with qualified supervisors with regard to children. Health and safety awareness and training practices are required, and protection regarding hours of work and the right to refuse work are also considerations.

We should be very proud of our film industry in Ontario.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, Ontario families know that a sustainable water source is vital to our well-being and our way of life. A great deal of the world's fresh water is found right in our own backyard in the Great Lakes.

A key plank of the Open Ontario act is to ensure Ontario becomes a centre of excellence in developing clean water technology. Many in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock are working towards the goal of creating a local clean water centre of excellence. Ontario has already been identified as a leader in the emerging market of clean water, a clean driver of economic prosperity.

Minister, protecting the environment by creating good green jobs seems to be a priority for the McGuinty government, but will becoming a leader in clean water technology put Ontario's water resources at risk?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question.

We live in an increasingly thirsty world. Economists estimate that there's a global market of some \$400 billion a year. We have 22,000 people in Ontario today working in the clean technology sector. When it comes to clean water, we have a world that is thirsty, and right here in Ontario we have the innovative companies that can meet that demand and be good neighbours to the rest of the world. We are the stewards of one of the greatest concentrations of fresh water on this planet.

It's important for us to be able to export our technology and create good jobs right here in Ontario. Twenty-two thousand jobs in clean technology is not enough. We want more of those jobs, and that's exactly why we passed the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. I want to applaud the member and the people in his riding who see that great opportunity for great new jobs—

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, my constituents will be reassured by your response. I believe they all realize that the only way to have a strong economy is to have a strong environment.

However, there is also a growing concern about the direction the opposition would take with clean water technologies. They voted against it, and with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust you're going to tie this into government policy.

Mr. Rick Johnson: There's growing concern about the clean water technologies the members opposite voted against, and with the nomination of the newest candidate in Carleton–Mississippi Mills, there's an increasing push—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member that his question needs to be about government policy.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, can you clarify for the House the effect that this would have on the province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We've learned from history what happens when we have a government that decides that they don't believe in water inspectors, when they slash conservation authorities.

I have an interesting quote here from someone who I think is well respected by this House but unfortunately may not be here for much longer. He said that he felt there were people in the province of Ontario who “don't believe in conservation authorities, they don't believe in milk marketing boards (and) they go so far as to say, ‘Let's abandon our planning laws in the province of Ontario.’”

On this side of the House, our team is loyal to the leader because our leader is loyal to his team. That's what's important in the province of Ontario: that we have the leadership to make sure that we can maintain the highest quality of regulation, that we believe in our public servants and that they play a valuable role. It's so important when it comes to clean water in the province of Ontario.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As recently as Saturday morning,

Lambton–Kent–Middlesex residents and their neighbours rallied to send a message to you and your government that they will no longer be ignored. Countless communities across our province have told you they're fed up with watching helplessly as your government pushes to install industrial wind farms all over, whenever and wherever it wants, with no regard for local expertise or the concern of residents.

Minister, last week you told my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills that you “are all about ensuring that the public and municipalities have their say.” Well, Minister, are these people wrong and you're right, or will you finally admit that you've stripped municipalities of decision-making powers?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Let's just remember that the party opposite voted against the Clean Energy Act. I don't know whether it was the clean part or the energy part that they didn't understand.

In the province of Ontario, we are revolutionizing our sources of power because our children are counting on us. I say to the member opposite that the number one reason that children in your riding go to the emergency rooms is because of poor air quality.

It is important for us to clean up our sources of power in this province. Now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Renfrew, Simcoe North and Burlington, please come to order. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk. The member from Renfrew.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The truth shall set them free over there. I say to them, talk to the Ontario Medical Association, talk to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, talk to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. What they tell us is that we need to clean up our sources of power because we are paying for it with needless pain and suffering in our health care system, and paying those bills as well. That's why we are committed—

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

1120

Mr. Robert Bailey: We're going to set you free in October, Minister.

To the minister: 81-year-old Stephana Johnston, slowed by her walker but energized by her passion, joined this protest which marched in Strathroy Saturday last. Her message to you and your government is this: “We are suffering and it is a horror story, and you are responsible because you agreed to the Green Energy Act.”

Minister, in Long Point, Mrs. Johnston has a say on the location of a new Tim Hortons, a Mac's Milk or a 7-Eleven, but not an industrial wind farm near her home.

Minister, I ask you: Who's right—Mrs. Johnston and the thousands of names on her petition, or do you know best?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It comes down to a very simple question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark, member from Durham.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It comes down to a very simple question: Do you believe in clean air or not? Do you believe in trying to clean up the environment for our children and our grandchildren or do you not? I can assure people that we will not make an approval unless the public and our municipalities are consulted. We will say no unless they have had an opportunity to tell us their concerns—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable members to please come to order. We have a number of guests here today who want to enjoy question period but they're having difficulties because of the interjections.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: As I was saying, it comes down to a very simple value question: You either believe in clean air for our children and our grandchildren and you'll do what's required to make sure that we break our addiction to coal-fired generation—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you going to shut them down in Ohio?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew: Speaking of shutting down—

Hon. John Wilkinson: —or you believe that it is important for us to do the right thing.

Surely to God, Mother Nature is sending us every signal. Surely to God, the cost that we're paying in the Ministry of Health to look after people who are ill needlessly is something that we can—

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

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, a Timmins senior died tragically in a retirement home fire. At the time of the fire, Linda Desjardins was the only staff member working at the home. Linda was courageous and she was quick. Because of her actions and those of the Timmins Fire Department, almost all of the residents in the home were ushered to safety. But the community is questioning whether this tragedy could have been prevented if more staff were actually working at the home.

My question is this: Why has this government refused to ensure adequate staffing levels in retirement homes in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, let me just say that, without a doubt, what happened in Timmins was a tragic event, and our thoughts and prayers go out to the family.

What I can say is that I heard that the community in Timmins all gathered together to help all the people who were in that home. We know that all the seniors are safe,

and as the minister responsible for seniors, our priority was to make sure that everyone was safe. We know that they are safe and I know that the fire marshal's office is investigating that fire.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government and this minister's retirement home regulation has been a failure and borders on negligence. Experts have been urging the McGuinty Liberals to ensure adequate staffing levels as well as ironclad plans for fire safety. Yet today, the regulations remain grossly inadequate and seniors remain vulnerable in retirement homes from one end of this province to the other.

When will this Premier and his minister move to actually protect seniors so that tragedies like this one can be prevented in the future?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: First of all, let me just say again how saddened we were to hear about the tragedy.

When the member opposite talks about the Retirement Homes Act, for the first time in Ontario's history we are regulating retirement homes. It is extremely important. Unfortunately, it was that party that did not agree to the Retirement Homes Act.

Let me just talk a little bit about the stronger protections in the Retirement Homes Act when it comes to fire safety. The act will require that retirement homes have a specific emergency plan. We will train all staff in fire prevention and safety. We will post an action plan in case of a fire. We will include information about the staffing levels and whether the home has sprinklers in each room—

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week's budget revolved around a theme of prudent fiscal management while protecting the services that matter most to Ontarians, services which include health care and education.

Would the minister tell the House what the government is doing to maintain this theme of prudent fiscal management while protecting our vital health care services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for the question. I want to reiterate that before the global recession hit, this government had a proven fiscal track record. We eliminated the inherited \$5.5-billion deficit and we delivered three balanced budgets.

But during the tougher economic times, instead of cutting services, this government is finding and eliminating inefficiency, and we're reinvesting the savings back into health care. For example, we're reducing funding for executive offices in major government agencies by 10% permanently over the next two years, and we're reinvesting that money right back into front-line care. This speaks to our plan to improve productivity and efficiency.

We have established the Drummond commission to look for better, more efficient ways to deliver services—

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: We know that health care is truly one of the pillars of Ontario's public services and something the people in this province depend on. When the global recession hit, Ontarians were concerned there would be a reduction in health care services, but this government stood up and defended health care even in the face of bad economic times.

Can the minister please remind this House about what this government is doing to help hospitals during these very tough economic times?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm very proud to report that we've been able to increase funding for Ontario's hospitals, just like we have every year since 2003, even in this tough economy. We had tough choices to make, we made them, and we are protecting the gains in health care.

In this coming fiscal year, the hospital sector will see an approximately 4.5% increase in funding. This includes a 1.5% increase in the overall base funding formula to meet service requirements of hospitals, an increase that the Ontario Hospital Association has applauded.

I'm equally proud to report that this government has not only made significant investments in health care since 2003, but we've decreased wait times and helped over a million Ontarians find a family doctor. Our results speak for themselves. This government continues to—

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Last week, I asked you a second question on the commercial fill operation under way on Morgans Road in my riding of Durham. This is similar to the operation on Lakeridge by Earthworx, which you'd be familiar with. This fill permit was issued by the Ganaraska Conservation Authority in June 2010.

Minister, instead of answering or responding to my question with concerns, you dismissed my constituents' concerns. In fact, Minister, you stated you are "all over this issue."

Minister, this is simply not the fact. The fill operation on Morgans Road has not had a visit from the Minister of the Environment or a director's order on it whatsoever. It's being led by the municipality, and the conservation authority is making arrangements to test the soil.

Minister, are you even aware of what's happening at the Earthworx operation on Morgans Road?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for bringing this matter to my attention. In last week's question, of course, he was talking about Earthworx. I can tell you, and I was clear, that my ministry actually issued an order on Earthworx October 25 of last year to

prevent them from accepting dirty fill. I'm glad to report to the House that Earthworx is now in complete compliance with the orders that we have placed on them. I think that is important.

But when it comes to the issue of Morgans Road, I'd like to say to the member that I appreciate the fact that he brought this to my attention. I have shared that with my deputy minister.

When it comes to issues of enforcement, of course, we have valued public servants that we appreciate on this side of the House. We have sent them to look into the issue that has been raised by the member. I appreciate it any time that the member wants to bring up any issue that has to do with his riding.

When it comes to Lakeridge, we are all over it, and I want to thank him for sharing information about Morgans Road.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Your apology is accepted.

Minister, citizens of the area formed a working group called the Clarington Citizens for Clean Water and Soil. They're concerned about having contaminated fill put in their water table. That's it. I want to recognize Ted and Beth Meszaros, Sherry Ibbotson and Lou Speziale, who within a few days took action on the issue. In fact, they're leading the parade.

This past Saturday, they organized a rally at the dump site on Morgans Road. Our citizens are acting. The mayor and council are acting. The region is acting. Where are you on this issue? You're not to be seen.

Hon. John Wilkinson: When it comes to Lakeridge in his riding, the first member to raise it in this House was the member for Danforth. That's who actually raised it in this House first, just to make the record clear.

When it comes to the issue, I want to share with the member what exactly we have been doing because of the issues that were raised by the community in regard to Lakeridge. Well, we've put an order on them. Soil testing to date done by my ministry has shown that—none have resulted in us believing that that is hazardous.

We have taken further action. The company must increase, and has increased, its sampling of soil coming to the site, separating soil coming from different sources. We've told them they have to do weekly soil audits, and soil monitoring must be done every 25 metres.

We also have required the company only to accept soil from sites which have soil management plans reviewed by the company and overseen by our—

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

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today I will be introducing thousands of signatures sent to me from across Ontario in support of my bill, Bill 131, which would give the Ombudsman power of oversight over hospitals, school boards, long-

term-care facilities and, in particular, because they're here today, children's aid societies.

Ontario is the only province in Canada where the Ombudsman cannot investigate problems that exist in those institutions. My question is, why?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to talk about the independent CAS oversight, because we support that, because we already have that. Child welfare services already have a number of mandated independent oversights, including Family Court oversight of all child protection matters before the court; the Child and Family Services Review Board; the Ombudsman, who has oversight of the Child and Family Services Review Board; the Auditor General; and the Office of the Chief Coroner and the pediatric death review, which, again, provides independent, unbiased reports—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second.

We welcome guests to the chamber all the time. As much as you may want to participate in the proceedings, you need to be elected. You'll have that opportunity in October. I just ask that any gestures or anything—they just aren't appropriate to the maintenance within the chamber.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It was our government that took additional steps to ensure that children in our care are well protected. We increased the powers of the Child and Family Services Review Board. We established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and that demonstrates our commitment to support a stronger and more responsive system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Today, I was out with a group of people, and they're in the Legislature. Thirty people came today to demonstrate in front of your ministry, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in support of Ombudsman oversight over children's aid societies. The report from the Ombudsman said that you are the only province—the only one in Canada—that doesn't have oversight over these institutions, particularly over children's aid societies. That is what the Ombudsman said.

There is no downside to having Ombudsman oversight. We and they do not understand why you and the Premier continue to refuse to give the Ombudsman that power to have oversight. We don't know why you're doing it. We don't know what the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member—he shouldn't be holding the prop up. Question?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This is the Ombudsman's report, and it's hardly a prop.

Why is it that you refuse continually to give the Ombudsman the power to have this oversight, the power to investigate problems, the power that these people are looking for—

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As I've said, child welfare services already include a number of mandated independent oversights, including the CFSRB, the Family Court, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the chief coroner, just to name a few.

We've increased the powers of the CFSRB, and Ontarians can rest assured that child welfare currently has a variety of complex, independent, overlapping, rigorous, government-mandated oversights, reviews, systems and accountability. The member opposite knows that. We continue to respect the Ombudsman, we work with the Ombudsman, we do receive recommendations from his office, and we're continuing to work with him very closely.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario has been home to many great innovations including the RIM BlackBerry, to which we're all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member that, notwithstanding the fact that it may be an Ontario-made product, as I reminded an honourable member about a prop before, I remind you as well.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you. I must exempt the member from St. Catharines from that addiction.

However, to get back to what I was saying, for Ontarians to continue to lead the way in global innovation, we must continue to support breakthrough discoveries in fields like theoretical physics that can help us exceed the capabilities of technologies that exist today. Understanding the fundamental laws of physics and applying that knowledge will help us fuel more innovation. In particular, by providing support in the field of quantum theories, we can help change the world.

How will the minister ensure that Ontario advances and expands on expertise in basic theoretical physics in order to make Ontario a world leader in innovation?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is a rather extraordinary story. We have already put \$70 million in the Perimeter Institute and are now adding another \$50 million over the next 10 years. This is arguably the world's global leader in quantum physics, with aspirations to develop the world's first quantum computer.

Many of us on this side of the House realize that 4.5% of the innovation companies in Canada are creating 50% of the new jobs. The Premier's Open Ontario policy, which he established last year, is driving that, to the point where we are within a month of a full job recovery at a point when the US is at less than 15%. And 80% of the jobs being created are coming from this. As a matter of fact, our sister organization in Kitchener-Waterloo, Communitech, delivers one new start-up every single day—one new start-up just at Communitech alone every day. That's where—

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning Morgans Road, Clarington, soil fill. This matter will be debated Wednesday at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to take a moment to welcome representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association who are here at Queen's Park. They are these folk, and perhaps some others: Siva Swaminathan, Sofia Ahmed, Denise Stanley, Stephanie Bowdrey, Wayne Guembel, Janet Guembel, Michael Ibrahim, Sue Taylor, Brian McIntosh and Sue Harris. I want to get all those names read so they'll appear in Hansard and they'll be forever remembered as having been here. Welcome, everybody.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to introduce some folks from the Canadian Cancer Society. I'd like to introduce Annette King, Andrew Noble, Donna Czucar and CEO Martin Kabat to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRENT POLAND

Mr. Robert Bailey: On April 8, 2007, Corporal Brent Poland and five other members of the Royal Canadian Regiment, 2nd Battalion, based at CFB Gagetown, were killed by an IED while on a mission in Helmand province near Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Corporal Poland grew up in Camlachie, near the southern shore of Lake Huron, in my riding. Throughout his life, Corporal Poland felt an intense desire to make a difference by serving his country. In a letter home to his family, Corporal Poland wrote, "Joining the army as an infanteer is something that I needed to do."

This Saturday, April 9, Corporal Poland will be posthumously awarded the Canadian Sacrifice Medal in a special ceremony near his home in southwestern Ontario.

The Sacrifice Medal was developed to commemorate the heroic efforts of Canadian soldiers serving our country on battlefields throughout the world. The colours of the Sacrifice Medal are black, red and white. They represent grief, spilled blood and the hope for peace. On the face of the medallion is an effigy of Her Majesty, the

Queen of Canada; on the reverse, a representation of the statue "Canada," which forms part of the Vimy Memorial in France and represents a young nation forever mourning her dead.

This weekend my thoughts and prayers will be with Corporal Poland's parents, Patricia and Don, and their extended family.

I hope for the quick and safe return of all Canadian military personnel stationed around the world.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

LORRAINE BADDELEY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Last Friday, after nine years as the general manager of the Streetsville BIA, Lorraine Baddeley moved to Port Dover with her husband to retire.

Lorraine's many accomplishments during nearly a decade with the Streetsville BIA include:

- the creation of the Streetsville Village Times newspaper;

- the introduction of the Litternot program to the village;

- numerous awards, including one for beautification, which won over all other BIAs in Mississauga;

- new events such as the Halloween Streetsville Spooktacular, the annual Christmas tree lighting, and a Taste of Streetsville, which showcases our top-notch restaurants in the village of Streetsville.

Perhaps Lorraine and the Streetsville BIA's most visible achievement is the transformation of the Streetsville Village Hall on Queen Street. The hall originally served as the location for the Cunninghams' tinsmithing business in the 1860s, and since then has served as the Streetsville public library, a centennial library and a traditional meeting hall. Today, thanks to the hard work of Lorraine and her BIA, the registered historical building has been completely renovated and is now the new home of the Streetsville Business Improvement Association.

Thank you, Lorraine, for having made Streetsville a wonderful place to work, to live and to raise a family. The work of Lorraine Baddeley will always beat in the heart of Streetsville.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize World Autism Day, which was marked on Saturday. Autism is a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain.

While many children sit on wait-lists for funding to treat autism, some families are forced to pay \$60,000 per year out of pocket for IBI therapy. I heard from Alison recently, mother of three young boys, two of whom have been diagnosed with autism, and the third is showing similar characteristics. Alison said in her email, "My children need IBI therapy, occupational therapy and

speech language pathology. I can't afford any of these. I am on wait-lists for services and respite. I've requested special services at home and am wait-listed despite the intake coordinator requesting emergency assistance for my family."

Alison's family is helping her out financially, but she pays out of pocket for private IBI for one of her children and says, "With two children with autism, it is a choice no parent should ever have to make ... which of my children will I give therapy to?"

Autism Ontario, in their response to last week's Liberal budget, said, "It is still not likely that we are going to see significant improvement in the currently unacceptable situations of service wait-lists."

I ask the McGuinty Liberals to stand up today for families like Alison's and many others across Ontario and acknowledge the difficult choices they have to make because of your inaction to provide them the services and supports they need.

YOUTH EXCHANGES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's my great pleasure to talk about an organization in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada, or SEVEC, is a distinctly Canadian program that enriches young people's lives by giving them hands-on experience with other youth in communities across the country.

Each year 5,000 Canadian youth travel free of cost to another part of Canada through the Youth Exchanges Canada programming. In Ontario, more than 1,000 youth will take part in the program this year, and in turn, over 1,000 youth from other parts of Canada will visit and learn about Ontario.

These exchanges can take on many forms. For example, a group from Ottawa recently travelled more than 4,000 kilometres to Aklavik, in the Northwest Territories, to explore new places and cultures, while at-risk youth from Toronto participated in an exchange with aboriginal youth in Vancouver. By bringing young people together to chat, hang out, play and learn, the exchange programs break down barriers among youth from different parts of the country, different cultures and backgrounds and different economic situations. With travel costs free, such exchanges mean that kids from virtually all backgrounds can experience the trip of a lifetime.

This year, SEVEC is also celebrating an amazing 75 years of service, as it started in 1936 and has facilitated educational exchanges for over 350,000 Canadian youth in that time.

I want to thank them for the work they do and wish them many more successful years. I also encourage members to learn about SEVEC and how an exchange might benefit a youth in their communities, as well as the benefit from those outside Ontario visiting and getting to know us here. I will be forwarding more information about SEVEC and its program to my colleagues in the very near future.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The Ontario PC Party has raised a number of concerns about this government's energy policies and the impact they're having on Ontario families and seniors.

My constituent Helen Johnston is a senior who has chosen a green option and hangs her laundry outside to dry. Mrs. Johnston doesn't want to pay the peak rates imposed by this government on top of their HST to do her laundry.

But she has an obvious challenge since off-peak hours are 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. Mrs. Johnson needs the sun to dry her laundry, but between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m., the sun doesn't shine in Ontario. If she wants to dry her clothes on a clothesline, she has to do her laundry before 7 a.m. With all her sheets, towels and clothes, she fears she will be forced to rise by 3:30 a.m.

Mrs. Johnston is not alone. The situation is being experienced by all Ontario families and seniors. Under this government, hydro rates have increased by 100% with the so-called smart meter. Even worse for Mrs. Johnston, hydro bills are expected to rise by at least another 46% within the next five years, by the government's own admission.

The PC caucus recently released the results of their "Have Your Say, Ontario" survey. Not surprisingly, the result shows that 28% of respondents identified hydro bills as the expense they were most concerned about. And 72% blame the HST and expensive energy experiments for their skyrocketing hydro bills. That's why an Ontario PC government will deliver a long-term, pragmatic energy program for Ontario that puts consumers first.

1310

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to talk about an important event in Sudbury. On Thursday, April 7, my fellow New Democrats Glenn Thibeault, MP for Sudbury, Claude Gravelle, MP for Nickel Belt, and I will be attending the Angels in Pink second annual Pink Glove Party at the Caruso Club. The event is a fundraiser for breast cancer equipment—more particularly to purchase a breast coil for the MRI machine at Sudbury Regional Hospital. I want to congratulate Beverly Brisco and all those brave women, the Angels in Pink, for their fundraising efforts. With their hard work, I know we will succeed.

I also want to draw attention to a disturbing trend: Accessibility to high-tech medical equipment in Ontario is not based on people's needs; instead it is based on a hospital's ability to fundraise. I think this is wrong. The allocation of provincial resources such as a PET scanner or breast MRI should be planned and rolled out in respect of medicare; that is, based on people's needs, not their ability to pay or fundraise.

I have no problem with community participation, but when Sudbury Regional Hospital's website tells us that

they presently care for 170 ALC patients and there are 19 people in the emergency room waiting for a bed as we speak, one can see how those issues become all-consuming.

It is time for the Minister of Health to take a serious look at the geographic distribution of high-tech medical equipment and its effect on access to care for everyone in Ontario, including people in the northeast.

DIABETES

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It's my pleasure today to welcome members of the Canadian Diabetes Association, who are here at Queen's Park to update us on the status of diabetes in Ontario. Having stood in this House many times to discuss diabetes, I'm proud of what our government has been able to do to fight diabetes in this province and to enhance the lives of those with this disease. Legislation passed to provide insulin pumps for juvenile diabetics has been very helpful, but we all know there is so very much more to do.

The Canadian Diabetes Association predicts that the number of diabetics in this province will increase from 1.169 million Ontarians in 2010 to 1.903 million in 2020. This means the costs for treating this disease will increase as well. Last week many of us, myself included, spoke to MPP Mangat's bill to make November Diabetes Awareness Month as part of the strategy to promote diabetes prevention, treatment and education, because people need the tools to recognize the symptoms of diabetes and learn how best to treat their illness.

Today, thanks to the wonderful work of the Canadian Diabetes Association, we have an Ontario diabetes strategy that sets targets and tracks our progress in the fight against diabetes. Everyone who has this disease needs to have access to the best possible care, and everyone who is at risk needs to know that they can lower their risk with a healthier lifestyle. Surely, by working with the Canadian Diabetes Association and other diabetes-focused organizations, we can do that.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The economy is improving and Ontario is turning the corner, thanks to the sound management of the McGuinty government. The 2011 budget makes affordable, strategic investments in health care and education and renews our focus on eliminating the deficit without drastic cuts.

Since coming into government, we have worked hard to rebuild the schools, hospitals, roads and bridges that were neglected by the previous government. During the global economic downturn, we made investments to create and preserve jobs while also protecting health care, education and other core services. We modernized Ontario's tax system so that businesses can compete more effectively in the global economy. We introduced full-day kindergarten to give our kids the best possible start. We increased the number of students in college and university to ensure that Ontario has the best-educated workforce in the world.

The Leader of the Opposition has stood against every one of these initiatives. He's against cutting taxes for families and business. He's against creating 600,000 new jobs across the province.

He refuses to share his plan, because he knows Ontario families won't support laying off teachers, closing hospitals and laying off nurses. Ontario families don't want to see these kinds of cuts again. They want to see health care and education protected, and the McGuinty government will continue to move forward in a responsible way.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The McGuinty government is committed to making the investments that are necessary to position Ontario as a global economic leader.

Our government also recognizes that education will be a key factor that determines which economies thrive in the highly competitive post-recession world. To build a skilled workforce, we have to ensure that post-secondary education is available to all Ontarians. That's why I was so proud to see, in last week's budget, committed funding to allow 60,000 more students to attend post-secondary institutions in this province. There will be room for every qualified Ontario student in this plan.

Over eight years, the McGuinty government has made a clear commitment to education at all levels; 200,000 more students are now learning in Ontario than in 2002-03. In that time, our province's post-secondary attainment rate has risen from 56% to 64%. That's higher than any other OECD country. With this new commitment, the McGuinty government will raise that rate to 70%.

Together we're building a stronger future for a stronger Ontario as our province turns the corner in its economic recovery. Together we're helping families build a better future for their children, for the people of Oakville and for the people of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2011 LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Mme Gelinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act in respect of certain tobacco products / Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en ce qui concerne certains produits du tabac.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce this bill. It being Daffodil Month and Cancer Awareness Month, I thought it would be appropriate.

This act is very simple and proactive. The act says that no person shall sell or distribute flavoured tobacco products, whether it be new tobacco products or smokeless tobacco products. As more and more youth in Ontario are being targeted by flavoured tobacco products and becoming addicted to nicotine, this act aims to prevent the next generation from becoming addicted to nicotine and curb the rise in cancer rates across Ontario.

PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to disclosure of severance payments / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public à l'égard de la divulgation des indemnités de cessation d'emploi.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Currently the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, requires public sector employers to disclose the salary and benefits of employees paid a salary of \$100,000 or more in a year. The bill amends the act to require public sector employers to disclose the salary, benefits and severance payments paid to employees if the total of those amounts is \$100,000 or more in a year. The bill also requires public sector employers to promptly disclose severance payments more than \$100,000. A definition of "severance payment" is provided.

1320

MOTIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE PROPOSED TRANSACTION
OF THE TMX GROUP
AND THE LONDON STOCK
EXCHANGE GROUP

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the meeting times for the Select Committee on the proposed

transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated February 23, 2011, the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group be authorized to present its final report to the Legislature no later than April 21, 2011.

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

Motion agreed to.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

DAFFODIL MONTH
MOIS DE LA JONQUILLE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: April is the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month, and I'm pleased to show my support for the fight against cancer by wearing the society's iconic daffodil.

I'm also pleased to welcome members of the Canadian Cancer Society, including Martin Kabat, the CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society in Ontario, to the Legislature today. Mr. Kabat heads the Ontario division of an extraordinary organization that has been making a difference in the lives of Canadians since 1938.

Their mission is impressive. The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer.

Cancer has touched the lives of many of us here in the Legislature and right across our great province. It takes the lives of more Canadians than heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease, pneumonia, diabetes, liver disease and HIV/AIDS combined. In Ontario, 65,100 people were diagnosed with cancer in 2010, and sadly, 28,200 died from the disease.

With 65,000 volunteers in Ontario, the Canadian Cancer Society's presence is felt right around the province. Many of us have supported and participated in their activities in our ridings, as well as the MPP education days here at Queen's Park.

Every April for Daffodil Month, volunteers across Ontario raise funds for the society by selling these bright yellow daffodils and by knocking on doors in their communities to collect donations. Money raised during Daffodil Month helps the Canadian Cancer Society fight back by working to prevent cancer, funding research to outsmart cancer and empowering, informing, supporting and improving the lives of Canadians with cancer.

Through the dedicated efforts of volunteers and the support of generous donors, the society has been a leader in funding cancer-fighting research for more than 60

years, providing more than \$1 billion in research funding throughout its history.

Thanks to progress in cancer research, 62% of those diagnosed with cancer now survive, compared with only 25% when the society began funding research in the 1940s.

Clinical trials funded by the Canadian Cancer Society have led to some of the most important advances in cancer-fighting treatment and continue to save lives of patients here in Ontario and right around the world.

The cancer society helps cancer patients get to their treatment and cancer-care-related appointments. It provides peer support to cancer patients and loved ones caring for someone with cancer, a service that helps people be more hopeful, reduces anxiety and helps patients and caregivers have a better understanding of what to expect in their cancer journey.

The cancer society answers cancer-related questions through their cancer information service. This service is free, and help is available in more than 100 different languages.

The government of Ontario has been pleased to partner with the society in a number of areas, including the Smokers' Helpline and the Driven to Quit Challenge programs, which help Ontarians quit smoking and stop using tobacco products.

In addition, the society's work to create awareness of our provincial breast cancer and colorectal cancer screening programs is sincerely appreciated.

The government is proud to have passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act at the urging of the Canadian Cancer Society volunteers and staff. The act has provided Ontarians with protection from the harmful health effects of second-hand smoke for almost five years now.

For Daffodil Month 2011, the society has introduced a new daffodil pin that is both an attractive and inspiring way for people to show cancer patients and their families that they are not alone in their fight.

Let me read members something from the Canadian Cancer Society's fightback.ca website: "To some, the daffodil is just a flower. To us, it's a symbol of strength and courage. A symbol of life. It says we will not give up. It says we will fight back. It says we will beat cancer."

In celebration of Daffodil Month, I would like to recognize and thank the Canadian Cancer Society and its dedicated volunteers for all they do.

I encourage all Ontarians to show your support for someone living with cancer. Make a donation and proudly wear a Canadian Cancer Society daffodil pin in April.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus in recognition of the month of April as Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Month.

First and foremost, I would like to commend the Canadian Cancer Society for the important work they do to support those who have been diagnosed with cancer as well as their loved ones. I would also like to thank Mr.

Kabat and the society volunteers in Ontario who have joined us today.

The Canadian Cancer Society assists cancer patients and survivors in many different and important ways, from research to fundraising, advocacy, support, right down to having a sympathetic ear to listen or to provide assistance with rides to or from treatment and appointments.

The daffodil is an important symbol of strength, courage and even of life itself. As the society's website fightback.ca notes, "It says we will not give up. It says we will fight back. It says we will beat cancer."

Daffodil Days ran from March 31 to April 3 this year. Bunches of daffodils were made available across the country at various community events, venues and even in some workplaces. For the entire month of April, Canadian Cancer Society volunteers will be selling the daffodil pins by donation, and many individuals will be canvassing their neighbourhoods for donations.

In my own neighbourhood in Whitby, the same gentleman has been our cancer society volunteer for over 20 years. That is true dedication.

Many people will not be aware that the origin of Daffodil Days in Canada began right here in Ontario. In the 1950s, a group of Canadian Cancer Society volunteers organized a cancer fundraising tea and decided to decorate the table with daffodils. These events soon became known as daffodil teas. One society volunteer who also worked at Eaton's thought it would be a good idea to have Lady Eaton host one of these teas. It was hugely successful, with approximately 700 women in attendance.

Another volunteer convinced restaurants to donate a portion of their sales on the opening day of the cancer society residential canvass in 1956. Volunteers were on hand in the restaurants to provide patrons with daffodils as they left. The sight of daffodils all over Ontario during this canvass was intriguing to many. Society volunteers even found that those offered daffodils would often try to pay or make further donations, and the society soon realized this would be a fantastic income generator for their cause.

The following year they sold daffodils on the streets of Toronto, and this was an instant success, raising \$1,200 in its first year.

Last year, daffodil sales generated \$2.8 million in Ontario alone.

The Canadian Cancer Society has supported individuals living with cancer and their families with dedicated, compassionate service for over 50 years.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I hope that the society and its wonderful volunteers will accept our sincere thanks for the wonderful work that you do each and every day in our communities.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today in honour of the Canadian Cancer Society and Daffodil Month. This day is in honour of the Canadian Cancer Society, their staff, their volunteers. It is a day to acknowledge the hard work done by Ontarians in

every community in this province who are fighting to end cancer.

We need everyone on board for this important fight, and we need to attack the blight of cancer from all angles. We need to work together to ensure prevention, to reverse the truly disturbing rise of cancer across our communities, and we need to ensure that every Ontarian has access to equity of medical services if they do fall sick.

1330

The Canadian Cancer Society offers us a vision for moving forward on both of these goals: prevention and treatment. It is their solutions which inspire so many of us MPPs to take action, and I thank you. There is so much more to be done, and we, as politicians, must step up to the plate and be the partner that groups like the Canadian Cancer Society require.

The NDP is proud to have worked closely with the cancer society on many different initiatives. In partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, the MPP from Brant and I successfully passed a private member's bill that banned the sale of individually sold candy-flavoured cigarillos. That was a big victory. Unfortunately, as we close loopholes, the tobacco industry works relentlessly and finds ways to get around them. That is why today I introduced a new private member's bill that will finally close the door to all flavoured tobacco products, whether it is tobacco or smokeless tobacco products.

I am proud of the work that I have done with the Canadian Cancer Society and activists in my community and across Ontario in pushing for a ban on artificial tanning among our children. We know that melanoma is one of the fastest-growing cancers among young people, that it is one of the deadliest forms of cancer, and that artificial tanning is directly linked to skin cancer. The private member's bill, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, that I introduced with the member from London-Fanshawe could protect the health of our children, but for some reason the government is happy to drag their feet on this issue, leaving the health of our children at risk.

I am very concerned about the failure of the Ministry of Health Promotion to take action to move forward on issues of vital importance. If we are going to get serious about reversing the rise in cancer rates—and we all know that 80% of cancers could be prevented; it's worth repeating: 80% of cancers could be prevented—we will need to see a change from the Ministry of Health Promotion. Right now, we have a patchwork of services and policies, and there's no reason for this.

Ontario was one of the first provinces to put in a Ministry of Health Promotion. We are lucky to have such a ministry, and it is the ministry that should be responsible for coordinating health promotion efforts and be courageous enough to lead health promotion efforts across this province. Instead, today this ministry seems to be missing in action. It is missing the basic tenets of health promotion and is happy to allow, frankly, industries to run the show. This needs to end in order to protect the health of Ontarians and to be the partner that the Canadian Cancer Society and activists require.

Today is a day for acknowledging hard-working groups, like the Canadian Cancer Society, and the thousands of volunteers across this province, and it is a day for us, politicians, to commit ourselves to being the partner that these groups and these individuals need in making the necessary change happen.

Il me fait plaisir de souligner le mois d'avril comme le Mois de la jonquille de la Société canadienne du cancer. J'ai expliqué que mon projet de loi par rapport aux cigarillos a passé, mais malheureusement, l'industrie du tabac a développé d'autres techniques pour aller rejoindre les jeunes.

C'est pourquoi aujourd'hui j'ai déposé un nouveau projet de loi qui interdirait tous les produits du tabac aromatisé, que ce soit le tabac avec ou sans fumée.

J'ai également un projet de loi pour prévenir les jeunes d'utiliser des salons de bronzage, étant donné qu'on voit une augmentation des cancers de la peau, surtout pour les mélanomes.

Je suis très heureuse de voir que des bénévoles de partout sont venus aujourd'hui pour appuyer la Société canadienne du cancer, et j'espère qu'ensemble, on pourra prévenir le cancer.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a petition calling on the Ministry of Transportation to install traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 12 and Fairgrounds Road in Orillia.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the intersection of Highway 12 at Fairgrounds Road in Orillia is a main traffic link for Notre Dame Catholic School, for the Odas Park fairgrounds and a number of local businesses; and

“Whereas we are concerned about the increased congestion and safety of the travelling public and the transportation of children to Notre Dame Catholic School;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to have the Ministry of Transportation install traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 12 and Fairgrounds Road, Orillia.”

I'm in favour of this and give it to Riley to present to the table.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got a couple of thousand petitions here around the whole issue of Ombudsman oversight.

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes.”

I am fully supportive, and I’ll be signing this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to present this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and their grandparents, as requested in Bill 22, put forward by MPP Kim Craiton; and

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents”—and there are a number of other specific subsections;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

It’s signed by a number of people, mostly from Niagara Falls and the Niagara area. I’m pleased to affix my signature to it and to ask page Logan to carry it for me.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“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 Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect” the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and “the Oak Ridges moraine; and

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

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabili-

tate or fill abandoned pits and quarries”—the concern here is contaminated fill;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions” to protect our water and “to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine,” specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in Durham, my riding.

I’m pleased to sign and support it and to present it to Jimmy, one of the pages here, in his last week.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service ... ; and

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

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

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

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

1340

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

“Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

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

“That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Fatemah.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

“Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

“Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

“Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

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

“That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones’s Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings.”

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Emma to take to the table.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai une pétition des gens de Sudbury.

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

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

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

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu’il relève directement de l’Assemblée législative. »

J’appuie cette pétition et je demande à Kiruthika to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

“Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in serving Ontarians; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

“Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

“Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

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

“Enact Bill 115, a private member’s bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Jia Jia.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn to help to correct systemic issues;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” to:

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes.”

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

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to read another petition on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have a right to request that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care pay for the diagnostics required to identify and treat chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency for those MS patients plagued by this debilitating disease; and

“Whereas the diagnostics consisting of an MRI scan or Doppler image to be used to confirm constriction of the veins in the neck, and then, if warranted, the angioplasty procedure to dilate the veins in question. Currently, angioplasty is not an option for MS patients; and

“Whereas it should be the choice of the MS patient, on advice of his or her physician, to have the procedure done in Ontario....”

It goes through a number of other technical clauses and concludes:

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

“To provide funding to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to cover the costs of the MRI scan or Doppler image and the subsequent angioplasty, if necessary, for MS patients.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this document and to ask page Jia Jia to carry it for me.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this very short petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax.”

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

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present more petitions from my riding on the issue of dumping contaminated fill on the Oak Ridges moraine. It reads as follows:

“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 Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and” indeed “a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium” immediately “on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine” and other sensitive areas “until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine” on Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road, specifically.

I ask this in good spirit and present it to Rafah, one of the pages, on their second-last week.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and

their grandparents, as requested in Bill 22, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor; and

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents....”

Speaker, there are a number of technical “whereas” paragraphs, and it goes on to read:

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I agree with this, will sign it and give it to page Daniel to take to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O’Toole: With your attention, I’ll finally get to the bottom of the chest of these petitions, here.

“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 Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and” indeed “a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

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

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

1350

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine,” and the greenbelt, specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in Durham.

I’m pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Riley, one of the most effective pages here at Queen’s Park.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2011, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It’s my pleasure today to rise on behalf of the Minister of Finance to join in the budget motion debate.

Ontario is definitely turning a corner to a better tomorrow. Jobs and growth are coming back. The economy is improving, and strategic investments in education and health care are laying the foundation for a future with increased productivity and, of course, a better quality of life for the people of Ontario.

This government has a realistic, achievable plan, and it's a plan to secure the province's long-term financial sustainability. We're determined to protect front-line services in Ontario. We believe that a strong economy that creates and protects jobs is essential to fulfilling that commitment.

Our Open Ontario plan to make the province stronger and more competitive is working. As the economy is getting better, the government is renewing its focus in a number of key areas: eliminating the deficit, reforming the delivery of our public services, protecting the gains we've made in education and in health care, and making life just a little bit easier for the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government is supporting the province's economic recovery and ensuring the lasting prosperity of our province.

Ontario's success depends on economic growth. It depends on job creation and it depends on strong education and health care systems. The Better Tomorrow for Ontario Act, we'll see, will build on the progress that we've made.

This province's greatest strength is its people. It's their talent, it's their drive, it's their relentless determination to succeed that makes Ontario so strong. Together, we're committed to making Ontario stronger. We have a realistic and responsible plan to overcome the challenges that we face. We're building on our government's plan to return Ontario finances to balance while at the same time protecting the gains that we've made.

In terms of jobs and growth, the global recession hit Ontario very hard. It hurt our families and it hit our jobs, our income, our savings and our sense of confidence. It left us shaken, feeling a little bit of uncertainty about what the future may hold for us. But we fought back. The government put together a responsible plan to strengthen our economy, to create jobs, to protect public services and to protect the things that matter most to the people of Ontario, including our education and our health care systems.

Jobs in Ontario are coming back at a faster rate than in other jurisdictions around the world. Employment, which is always a key economic indicator, is near pre-recession levels. According to Statistics Canada, almost 233,000 new net jobs have been created from May 2009 to February 2011. That means that we have recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the economic downturn. To put things into perspective, the United Kingdom has recovered less than 45% of the jobs lost during the recession and the United States has recovered only 17%. Again, I reiterate that Ontario has recovered 91% of the jobs lost. Statistics Canada also tells us that 84% of those jobs created have been full-time jobs, and in addition, the unemployment rate in Ontario has recently fallen to 8% from 9.4% at the

height of the recession. That's progress, and our plan is working.

In our first five years as a government, we worked with Ontarians to repair and rebuild the province's neglected schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, roads and bridges. Our government also eliminated the \$5.5-billion deficit we inherited, and we delivered three balanced budgets.

Then came the economic downturn. The recession not only hit our families but our businesses and our government. However, we did not cut people loose or resort to arbitrary across-the-board cuts. Instead, we ran a deficit to stimulate the economy and protect front-line services that Ontario families rely on.

Several governments around the world ran deficits to weather the storm and kick-start their economies. Here in Ontario, we invested in infrastructure, we created and protected hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we took steps to make our economy more competitive. In 2010-11, the Ontario economy is turning the corner after the global recession and, of course, is now poised for a period of sustained economic growth. The government's continued approach to prudent fiscal performance provides a solid foundation for supporting the economic recovery and ensuring long-term prosperity for the province of Ontario.

This year's deficit is projected to be \$16.7 billion, which is \$3 billion lower than outlined in the 2010 budget. The balanced pace of deficit reduction ensures the province will overcome the fiscal challenges it faces and do so through realistic and fiscally responsible measures.

Ontario's real GDP grew by an estimated 2.8% in 2010 and is near pre-recession levels. It's an indicator that Ontario's economy is turning the corner. The province's modest but solid pace of growth reflects a fundamentally sound domestic economy and continued increases in global demand for Ontario's exports.

Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline. We've overachieved our budget targets in five of the last seven fiscal years. The expenditure management measures introduced in the 2010 budget have produced immediate dividends, with the 2010-11 total expense projected to be \$2.6 billion lower than forecast just one year ago. This is the second year for which the government is expecting a decrease in total expense.

We continue to look for ways to deliver services more efficiently and more effectively. We're making the government more streamlined and responsive to the needs of the people.

The McGuinty government will continue to invest in the people of Ontario. We have cut personal income taxes. We have introduced a wide variety of tax credits and benefits that give money back to the people. We've introduced several tax cuts and other benefits to make life a little bit easier for the people of Ontario, such as the Ontario clean energy benefit, the northern Ontario energy tax credit, the children's activity tax credit, the Ontario

energy and property tax credit, the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant, the Ontario sales tax credit and, of course, the Ontario child benefit. With the changes we've made, approximately two thirds of households—those with incomes of \$90,000 or less—have more money in their pockets.

Our plan for the economy is all about giving Ontario families and businesses what they need to be successful. Regarding a business-friendly Ontario, the McGuinty government's plan continues to encourage an environment for job creation. We will continue to partner with businesses and protect job growth.

Over the next several weeks, Ontario and private sector partners will be announcing new investments of more than \$1.3 billion, including nearly \$175 million from the province, creating and retaining nearly 10,000 jobs. We're building a climate for investment in Ontario. We're creating an environment where businesses can thrive, innovate and be competitive in a global economy. We've introduced the HST, and we've reduced corporate tax rates, which are making Ontario businesses more competitive and, of course, strengthening business investment.

1400

AGS Automotive Systems had this to say: "The recent tax measures put in place by the Ontario government have significantly benefited our business in terms of helping manufacturing companies become more competitive in the global marketplace."

In the same vein, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada states, "The HST is crucial to both the short-term recovery and the long-term prosperity of Ontario's manufacturing sector."

At the same time, a recent report by Michael Smart, Canada's leading economic expert on the impacts of sales tax harmonization, found that within six months after the HST was implemented, businesses had already passed on about two thirds of their savings from the HST through lower consumer prices. Also, a report by Jack Mintz, a University of Calgary economist, indicates that our tax reforms will ensure that we can, in fact, compete successfully in a global economy and will help create nearly 600,000 net new jobs in Ontario by 2020.

The McGuinty government wants Ontario to be the place where workers build innovative products and services, and the world wants to be here. This is how we choose to compete in the global economy: best workers, cutting edge products and services, putting Ontario on the map as an attractive place for businesses to invest. That's where the opportunity is, and that's where we enthusiastically embrace it.

The quality of education is on the rise and continues to be on the rise in Ontario. Ontario's economic success depends on a well-educated workforce that can compete in a global economy. When it comes to the global economy, it's not only about how well you're doing today; it's about how well you're going to do in the future. As US President Obama stated, "Those places that out-educate us today are going to out-compete us tomorrow." We've known that for a long time right here in Ontario.

Since 2003, the government has made significant investments in education that have yielded measurable results in terms of improved literacy, improved numeracy, improved test scores, lower primary class sizes and higher graduation rates. This year, we're announcing funding to help support more than 60,000 additional students in colleges and universities by 2015-16. We're proud of a plan that sees more students benefit from world-class post-secondary education. We support raising Ontario's post-secondary education attainment rate to 70%, which is up from 56% in 2002.

That's actually a very high standard relative to other OECD countries. Our students right here in Ontario are among the best in the world. Pedagogical assessments by, for instance, the Programme for International Student Assessment and the OECD have reported and proven that. In addition, McKinsey and Company in its report entitled *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* identifies Ontario as a global leader in this area. These important measures of success indicate that we're grooming a highly skilled, highly educated workforce right here in Ontario.

There's another important initiative, of course, and that's full-day kindergarten. We've known for a long time that a strong start in school makes for a strong finish. Full-day kindergarten is a key part of the government's plan to help Ontario's children get the best possible start and to help our busy parents save time and money. The initiative, as we know, is the first of its kind in North America, and we're proud of our role and proud to be a leader in this area.

From kindergarten to graduate school, the McGuinty government has chosen to strengthen our publicly funded education system because we believe building education is more than sound social policy; it's essential economic policy.

We need more than a smart workforce, of course. We need a healthy workforce, and a healthy workforce, as we know, is a productive workforce. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has taken significant steps to strengthen Ontario's public health care system. We have focused on rebuilding and transforming the public health care system to give Ontarians better access to primary care and shorter wait times, while promoting health and preventing illness.

According to the Fraser Institute's 2010 report entitled *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada*, patients in Ontario experience the shortest wait—that is, 14 weeks from general practitioner referral to elective treatment for surgical and other therapeutic treatments—in Canada.

That's just one example of how we're transforming our health care system for the better. Our government is also managing health care costs through investments in efficiencies, investments in cost prevention and more integrated local health services, through other initiatives such as the Ontario drug strategy and, of course, the electronic health records.

According to Mr. Greg A. Reed, who is president and CEO of eHealth Ontario, the organization is "on track,

rolling out electronic health records to meet the government's commitment to provide them for all Ontarians by 2015." Once again, that's great progress.

Our work is not done and we're committed to doing more. In the 2011 budget, we announced additional funding over the next three years to provide approximately 90,000 more breast cancer screening exams, and we will invest in a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, starting with children and youth. In addition, this government is enhancing pharmacy services for Ontarians who receive drug coverage through the Ontario drug benefit program, primarily seniors and social assistance recipients. This builds on the successful MedsCheck program.

Our record in health care in the province of Ontario speaks for itself. According to a 2010 TD Economics special report entitled *Charting a Path to Sustainable Health Care in Ontario*, "Ontario's residents saw first-hand in the 1990s how severe cutbacks in health spending can drive down the quality of—and confidence in—the health care system. It ultimately took more than a decade of massive investments by the Ontario and federal governments to repair much of the damage." Indeed, the McGuinty government has rebuilt a strong public health care system in Ontario that delivers quality, evidence-based care and puts patients first.

We're announcing the extension of the current risk management program for grain and oilseed farmers. We will support cattle, hog, sheep and veal farmers by implementing the new risk management program, as well as the self-directed risk management program for the edible horticulture sector, which is fruits and vegetables.

Just as people and families do in Ontario, governments must live within their means. We will continue to protect education and health care while continuing to eliminate the deficit. We are fully aware that the status quo is not an option. In addition, the government will establish the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, which will be chaired by the respected economist Don Drummond. The commission will provide advice on the fundamental reforms that would help accelerate the government's plan to eliminate the deficit while continuing to protect education and health care.

We choose to preserve and safeguard quality of life for all of the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government is improving the fundamentals: education, health care, infrastructure, electricity, tax reform. We've modernized Ontario's tax system. We've rebuilt Ontario's rundown electricity system, as well as our education and our health care systems. We've kick-started our clean energy sector and we've protected our automotive industry. That's progress. These are real results. They put Ontario on a more competitive footing. We continue to create more opportunities for families in Ontario and for businesses.

1410

The choices have come at a financial cost but they've also paid economic dividends for the people of Ontario and for their daily lives, both now and in the future. Our plan to help the people of Ontario through the recession

and build for the future is working. It's making a difference in the lives of the people of Ontario in the areas that matter most in their daily lives. It helps them now and it helps the future of their children's lives.

We will continue to build a stronger Ontario brick by brick.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments with respect to the speech made by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga with respect to the budget motion. I know, as the parliamentary assistant for finance, that she has had to cover a lot of territory here. I'd just like to address my comments to the health care matters, if I might.

I would like to start, first of all, by saying that I am very grateful to the government for bringing forward the commitment that they have to funding mental health and addictions programs, starting with children. This is a very good first step and I congratulate them for doing that. I know that many families across Ontario are very pleased, too. We will wait to find out how the details roll out over the next few months. But in several other areas of health care, I still do have some concerns.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga mentioned that the wait times in Ontario are the best in Canada. Well, I guess in a couple of procedures maybe they are. If you're only talking about hips and knees, I think that there has been some progress made, but there are hundreds and hundreds of medical procedures in Ontario where we're not making significant progress and Ontario continues to languish. Don't take my word for it; look at the Canada-European health index that was contributed to by the Frontier public policy organization in Winnipeg. They compared the health jurisdictions of about 34 different countries, not including the United States, and Canada—Ontario included in that—comes very close to last in that area.

Secondly, with respect to eHealth, Ontario has a pretty dismal history in terms of developing electronic health records, with over a billion dollars spent and not much to show for it. I know that Mr. Reed and his group are doing what they can to move this thing forward, but the fact remains that under the McGuinty Liberals we are years behind where we should be in the development of ehealth records, which are so important to the health of all Ontarians, so there's still a lot more that we need to do.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, the parliamentary assistant, for providing a very broad-spectrum commentary on her government's budget. But there are two things that I want to address and I will enlarge upon when I have my turn to speak at length.

One is that this budget does not address the growing and profound crisis in child care. I think that everyone in this House appreciates the expansion of all-day kindergarten. What people don't appreciate is that the funds have not been put in place to allow the daycare centres

that we badly, desperately need to actually expand and take in more children. In fact, those centres face financial crises because they don't have the capital to make the changes so that they can provide secure, proper places for small children. These centres have been in difficulty, financially, for years, and with the loss of the older children to all-day kindergarten they find that their financial foundations are under threat. Those realities come home to me in daycare after daycare as I talk to the providers in my riding. This is an issue that can't be ignored but was largely ignored in this budget.

The second thing I want to say is that the other day I had the opportunity to listen to the Minister of Finance himself at the Economic Club of Canada talk about his budget. I thought for a moment that I had gone through the looking glass because all I could hear him talking about were tax cuts for business and more tax cuts for business. That's the centre of the strategy for this government in this budget and the ones that preceded it. That is not a strategy; that is the path to the demoralization of a society.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Even as the budget delivered a deficit \$3 billion less than was expected only a year ago—\$3 billion less—among the things that this budget did is to build on Ontario's success during the past seven years in education. Our province now has children graduating at a higher and higher rate from secondary school. When we came to government in 2003, we were losing one out of every three students who wouldn't graduate secondary school. Now, nearly four out of five students are graduating from secondary school.

This budget steps up and adds to the Reaching Higher plan unveiled in 2005 that laid out \$5 billion over five years to improve post-secondary school. This budget says to Ontario, "Another 60,000 new student spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities." So it stands to reason that if you're graduating more kids successfully from your secondary schools, which are now among the top 10 in the world, right up there with traditional overachievers such as Finland and Singapore and similar jurisdictions—Ontario is one of those top 10—we've got to be able to ensure that we have the spaces for them to excel—and we do—in our colleges and in our universities and in our trade schools.

Ontario has laid out 60,000 new student spaces in our colleges and universities. There will be room for every qualified Ontario student, and a commitment that this province has made to the generation that's graduating from universities, the generation that will be replacing my generation, the retiring baby boomers to whom it will seem we all retire over the same weekend, and that is that if you've got the ability, if you've got the intellectual horsepower, lack of resources will not stop you from attending a program for which you're qualified in any college or university in Ontario.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I find no fault with anything specifically that the member, the parliamentary assistant from Kitchener–Conestoga, said, because she did read the notes that were given to her almost without fault, I guess my point being that she's destined to do that because, as a parliamentary assistant, her job is to sell, at any price, this budget—I know how difficult it is for her—and I guess put a little wrapping around this thing.

I look at our local media and hear our health critic—Christine Elliott is featured prominently in this article. It says, "Health Care, Education Key Focus of Provincial Budget," which is a fairly straightforward thing. I'm not sure those are the instructions that the chief economist for the TD Bank, one of the Bay Street bankers who was referred to this morning by our leader, Tim Hudak—what instructions was he given to find some reasonable approach to the huge debt and deficit that this government is ignoring? That's the most troubling part of the budget. Everyone wants more health care, more education, more services, as the member who just remarked said. Our concern is that the current economics here, even according to Don Drummond, their blue-ribbon panel—he said, in the *Globe and Mail*, I think it was last October or November—in my remarks this afternoon, I will have those formal documents—that Premier McGuinty has a structural deficit. They're spending more than they can possibly earn. That's like somebody living in a house they can't afford. That's basically what he said. On top of that, we had John Manley, the former finance minister, say the same thing.

So, deal with what the reality is, not the numbers in the speeches they gave you—

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I want to thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa, the member from Toronto–Danforth—I want to recognize this member as the finance critic, and travelling the province and working together, it has been a—I guess I really can't say "a pleasure." Has it been a pleasure? No. We're doing admirable work together—the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the member from Durham.

In the short time that I have, I wanted to reiterate this quote from the 2010 TD Economics special report entitled *Charting a Path to Sustainable Health Care in Ontario*, because this is a very interesting quote that I think sums up the big picture: "And Ontario's residents saw first-hand in the 1990s how severe cutbacks in health spending can drive down the quality of—and confidence in—the health care system. It ultimately took more than a decade of massive investments by the Ontario and federal governments to repair much of the damage."

1420

I guess that goes across the board. As an educator, the idea of health care and education works the same. I was teaching during Rae Days. I walked the picket line during the Mike Harris as Premier days. Seeing the devastation to education and to health care under previous governments, I think we can't stress enough the importance and

the effect of the investments the McGuinty government has made since 2003, and it continues to make the commitment to protect our public services: the commitment to education, the commitment to health care, the commitment to jobs and the economy.

Those investments are there. Those investments are keeping our children in school. They're keeping our nurses and doctors in the hospital. They're keeping our jobs and our economy working right here in Ontario, and it continues through the Open Ontario plan to keep things working. In the last minutes, I just want to commend the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, for this budget. He's landed a fine, balanced and appropriate budget.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today we are debating the budget motion. The budget motion reads "... that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government." It's a very simple motion. Of course, being a Conservative, it would perhaps be expected that I say I don't agree with this motion.

But let's not start there. Let's look at what the budgetary policy of this government has been and where it has gotten us as a province. Perhaps we can start by looking at the revenue numbers this government has generated out of the taxpayers of Ontario.

The taxpayers of Ontario are a hardy lot. We are a wealthy province, and therefore the people who make up our province are wealthy and have deep pockets, by and large. The average person in Ontario lives at a very high standard of living when judged against people living around the world. We probably live in the 95th percentile or better of the world's population. So Ontarians, by and large, even those amongst us who don't feel as though they're rich, when measured against the world population, are very well off. Therefore they have deep pockets.

What this government has done since its election in 2003 is increase the revenue it generates through taxes by almost 60%. That's at a time when the economy of this province has grown just around 10%. So the economy of the province grew 10% and the government extracted a 60% increase in taxes over that same period, far, far and away above the growth in the economy. Perhaps that's something we should look at as to whether it's a policy.

If we go back and look at the Liberal government of David Peterson, for instance—he was first elected in 1985 and served until the year 1990—what was the budgetary policy of that government? Well, the last budget that Larry Grossman brought into this province in the spring of 1985 was \$24.4 billion. I believe that was the total budget that Larry Grossman brought in. The last budget that Bob Nixon brought in under the Peterson government was in the spring of 1990, and I believe that budget was \$48.79 billion. From \$24 billion to \$48 billion over the course of five years. So the Peterson government doubled tax revenue, taking that money out of the pockets of Ontarians.

That was the tax policy that the Liberals of David Peterson had: to take every single penny out of the

pockets of Ontario taxpayers that they thought they could get away with. They effectively doubled the taxes over his term of office.

The third party came into power on September 6, 1990, and they inherited a budget of \$48.75 billion. But taxes had risen so high that they had little room to increase income taxes; they had little room to increase fees. Basically, the only room the NDP were left with after five freewheeling years of the Liberal government, including a horrendous health tax in 1989—which at that point increased taxes about \$2.5 billion, which at that point in time was the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. The NDP took office and the only avenue they had to increase spending, which they took, was to go into deficit financing. So at the end of four and a half years, in 1995, the last budget that Bob Rae brought in was about \$57 billion; \$57 billion from \$48 billion is about an 18% increase in provincial revenue. But Bob Rae was a piker on tax increases. Even though the NDP are saddled with the opinion of the general public that they are free-wheeling and free-spending, they only increased taxes 18% in the province of Ontario, where David Peterson increased them a full 100%.

Along came a chap by the name of Mike Harris, who inherited a provincial budget of \$57 billion, and over the next eight years that budget increased to \$68 billion over eight years. That was a 9% increase, just a little over 1% a year in increased tax revenues to the province. I would argue that the province was well run from a fiscal point of view.

Then the government of Dalton McGuinty took over. He inherited a \$68-billion budget and has increased that spending by a full 60%. So it seems to me that over the last four governments that this province has had, the Liberals increased it by 100%, the NDP increased it by 18%, the Conservatives increased it by 9%, and the current Liberal government increased it by 60%. You can see a trend. When you see a trend, it really represents a policy. So what is the budget policy?

This government hasn't changed much from the Peterson days. The policy is to extract every penny that it thinks it can from the taxpayers' pockets. There are those who have said that the take-home pay of working Ontarians is really just unused tax room; we can increase taxes by the amount that these people, hard-working Ontarians, take home. That's part of the Laffer curve philosophy: that if you tax people 100%, you will get zero revenue; likewise, if you tax them 0%, you will also get zero revenue. Somewhere between the two points of taxing them not at all and taxing them to a maximum is the most efficient level of taxation—something that this government has gone far beyond.

1430

If we look at some of the other numbers in the budget documents, we'll see that government expenses have increased significantly along the same level as revenues have, as something you would expect, although expenses have gone up more than revenue, which is why we have a deficit.

Let's examine the deficit for a while. The deficit has risen, first, to \$24 billion and then, through some voodoo which I'll speak to later, came down to \$19 billion; now it has dropped to \$16 billion for the next fiscal year. A reducing deficit is a good thing. However, any deficit at all has an immoral side to it.

A deficit is when you borrow money from future generations of Ontario taxpayers. I've sat in this House for almost 16 years now, and I've never seen a bill go through that gives us permission to take money from future taxpayers. I've never heard from future taxpayers that they think it's okay for us to use their money.

In any other part of society, when you take money from future taxpayers or you take money from anyone in our society without their permission, it's called stealing. You, as a government, and we, as legislators, are taking money from future generations without their permission. I think that this government should give very serious consideration as to what they are doing and why. You are spending far beyond your means and you're doing it on the backs of future taxpayers. Personally, I believe there's an immoral aspect to what you're doing.

If we look at the total debt that has been accruing over the course of Ontario's history, by 2003, the total debt got to be about \$148 billion. Over the course of Confederation, since 1867, we have accumulated \$148 billion in taxes. This government, in eight years, is on line to double that debt to almost \$300 billion. By 2012, if there isn't a miracle in the balancing of the budget, which this government doesn't seem to be making an effort towards, we will in fact have doubled the debt in the eight and a half years that this government has been in place. That is a legacy that should concern everyone in this House and should be felt deeply by every member of the government. It's an irresponsible expenditure, it's an irresponsible handling of taxpayers' dollars and it's a squandering of our future. If it wasn't for low interest rates, the consequences of that would be horrendous.

I personally believe that interest rates over the next five to seven years are going to return to somewhere around the norm of 6%—about three times what you're spending now. Now we're spending \$10 billion a year in interest to service that debt. Five to seven years from now, that could be \$30 billion. Imagine what you could do, if you didn't have to service a debt, with \$30 billion—or even with \$10 billion. You could probably build ten 250-bed hospitals a year. They probably run somewhere in the order of \$800 million each. We could build new universities. We could build new roads. We could build all the things that Ontarians want if we weren't servicing that debt, a debt that this government has doubled.

I think that you want to have a serious talk to yourselves about what your legacy is, the legacy that you're leaving this House with. I, for one, think it will be remembered by the people of Ontario for a long time to come, because it's not only this government that did it; David Peterson did it as well. He doubled—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And Mike Harris.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I just reviewed the numbers. For those people at home, the opposition just woke up. They're telling me that Mike Harris added to these figures. As I said in my comments, Mike Harris increased the spending of this government 9% over eight years—9%, not 100%—at a time when the economy was expanding. In those years, we expanded the economy somewhere between 16% and 20%, so the tax revenues grew half of what the economy expanded.

What has this government done? When the economy has expanded around 10% over the eight years of your governance, you have expanded government revenues by 73%, an entirely different ratio. One is sustainable; one is growth-oriented; the other is leading to disaster.

It has led us into have-not status. Of course, we're getting about \$2.5 billion from have-not status this year. Our welfare payment from the rest of Canada is \$2.5 billion. This Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty has a fancy formula, and they say, "We pay \$5 billion in and we get \$2.5 billion out. We're still paying for our own deficit." I don't think I can use the language as to what I feel about that kind of thinking; I don't believe it's parliamentary.

If you figure quickly and you don't give it much thought, those numbers will work. If you do give it any thought, if you do give it some consideration and see what would happen down the road if you extrapolate those numbers, you will find out that Ontario will get weaker and weaker every year that we continue to be a have-not province. It's a shame for the economic engine of Canada to be in that situation, and it's in that situation because almost every industry that drove this great province has had an incursion with this government and has had its problems.

The forest industry, which northern Ontario lives by and which has tremendous bonuses and attributes to southern Ontario, is an industry that truly supports all of this great province, and they've been decimated in the north. We've heard about it in debate. The NDP have been warning the government about the consequences. Many of their members come from the north and they're fully aware of the consequences of what's happening in the north.

When electrical prices increase in the pulp and paper business—they're big users of electricity—the problems are horrendous and mills close. Some 30, 40, 60, 80 mills in northern Ontario have closed. Yes, they have closed in other provinces as well, and a lot of it is because of the Canadian dollar, but there are many places that are doing much better than Ontario because they've controlled those costs that are controlled by this government—hydro costs, for instance; costs of transportation; stumpage fees; all kinds of expenses; all kinds of costs of doing business in Ontario. All of those costs have increased. This government can't point to one cost in Ontario—not one cost in Ontario—that has gone down under their term of government.

As the legacy of eight years in government, that's a very sad legacy. It's unfortunate that the economic engine of Canada has fallen on such hard times.

1440

In this budget, of course, there have been a number of reallocations of funds, things that will make the balance ledger look a little better, things like that they've reduced their original budget projections from \$19.7 billion down to \$16.7 billion; things like the elimination of a \$700-million planned reserve fund. We've always had a reserve fund in the Ontario budget, and by eliminating that \$700 million it reduces what the deficit looks like. It didn't reduce the deficit one penny, but it reduces what it looks like. It's a visual, a straight visual. It doesn't have any effect on the government of Ontario or their net results.

I'm saddened by this budget motion. I can't support this budget motion because of what it does to Ontario. It seems to me that the budget motion talks about the principles of finance, and the principles of finance that have been put forward by every Liberal government this province has had since the Second World War, in modern times—every single one has increased the amount of taxes, increased deficits—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I want to thank the member from Halton for his comprehensive review of the budget and the history of budgets and deficits here in Ontario for the last 25 or 30 years.

I want to take the opportunity, though, once again to say that when people read this budget, when they assess the core of the economic strategy that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance, they will find tax cuts for corporations at the heart of it. I've had the opportunity to be on a television panel with the House leader, the member from Nipissing, who went after the Conservatives because they were offering tax cuts in their programs, talking about all of the nurses who would be laid off and all the programs that would be eliminated because of those tax cuts, and at the same time not recognizing that they were in fact engaged in cutting \$4 billion in taxes out of the revenue stream that Ontario depends on.

I find it an extraordinary process that this Liberal government, this McGuinty government, thinks that it can build an economy in Ontario by undermining the revenue of the public services that are needed to provide the roads, the schools, the hospitals, all of that infrastructure that makes a modern economy operate. That is not a strategy for building our economy; that is a strategy for keeping some very powerful backers onside, but it is not one that will in fact build Ontario.

In, I think, 1999-2000, Paul Martin, the federal finance minister, introduced the biggest tax cuts in Canadian history for corporations, and since that time, as you are well aware, we have seen an ongoing decline in manufacture in this province. That strategy doesn't work.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: The budget document, which is available free online for anyone who wants it, is really

interesting reading. For example, there's an urban myth that suggests that somehow or other bureaucracy is galloping ahead in the province of Ontario, except that like most urban myths, it's not true.

Let's just use some of the numbers out of the budget document. I'm quoting from chapter 1 of the budget. What do you think it costs per capita to run government in Ontario? It costs \$186 on average all across Canada, except in Ontario, where, if you listen to some of the naysayers, you would think that we must be higher than that. In fact, we're lower. Only one province in the entire country spends less money on governing itself than the province of Ontario. That would be—surprise—Nova Scotia. Among the provinces that spend more per capita governing themselves than the province of Ontario are Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Alberta. People think Alberta must be the leanest and the meanest place in the country, but in fact, in terms of what it spends to govern itself, Alberta spends more than Ontario. Of course, the high spenders are Quebec and, not surprisingly, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island, largely due to the economies of scale or, in this case, the reverse of them.

In fact, the size of the Ontario public service, over the seven years that our government has had the privilege of managing the province's finances, has dropped and continues to drop. Just the implementation alone of the HST has meant that Ontario can transfer 1,250 civil servants.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to make a few comments with respect to the speech that was made by my colleague the member from Halton, who, I think, made some really important points with respect to the recent budget and this budget motion that is before us.

He devoted his time to discussing probably the biggest failure of this budget, which is the failure of the McGuinty government to control spending. Single-handedly under their watch, the debt in Ontario has doubled since they took power in 2003. Imagine all the debt that accumulated from Confederation up to 2003; that has now been doubled in eight years. It's pretty astounding to comprehend.

That means debt of over \$17,000 each for every man, woman and child in Ontario. That's serious. It's something we need to get a hold of. It affects our international reputation. It affects our international standing.

Some people say that it's a good thing that the budget didn't commit to a whole lot of new spending. Well, the fact of the matter is, there's no money to spend. Ontario's broke right now. We need to get this under control, and it's not likely that it's going to happen under this government.

Even on their own projections, they're saying that it's not likely that Ontario will be able to get out of deficit until 2017-18. That's not a plan. That is—at best—a hope, a dream, a wanting it to be. But there's no clear plan for how we're going to do that. Something comes

along every five minutes, and it'll be, "That's a good idea; let's spend some money on this."

We really need to get serious about this. This has serious repercussions for our children and our grandchildren, and if we don't do something about it now, they're not going to have any hope for the future.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to rise to join this debate this afternoon. I'd like to thank the members from Halton, Toronto–Danforth, Mississauga–Streetsville and Whitby–Oshawa.

The key point in this budget is that we will eliminate the deficit while protecting key public services and economic growth. We have a plan for doing it over a reasonable length of time. Other governments are talking about doing it over four years. We'll see how that rolls out. But the key thing here is that we are going to eliminate the deficit. We're reforming the delivery of public service. We're protecting gains that we've made in our education and health care systems. Some 91% of the jobs that were lost during the recession have been recovered.

Now, I found it interesting listening to my colleague from Halton when he talked about the Harris government, from 1995 to 2003, only increasing spending by 9%. But it was done on the backs of the education system, the health care system, social services.

Even during this time of great economic growth, they still managed, although the government of the day said that the budgets were balanced—I remember attending the famous Magna budget that was held outside this chamber, totally disrespecting our system of government when it happened. And what happened? We find out afterwards—the auditor reports back that there was a hidden \$6-billion deficit. Our government has set up the process so that this will not happen because the books will be audited at the end.

I remember 26 million school days lost during the former government's reign. I remember health care facilities closed. How many social programs were lost?

We've delivered, in this budget, a risk management program that they will vote against, and support for children's mental health that they will vote against. Sixty thousand new college spaces will be created that they will vote against, and 90,000 more breast cancer screenings will be done, and they will vote against that. They should be ashamed for doing it.

1450

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's flabbergasting, actually, that the member for Haliburton would make those comments. They were all wrong. I don't know how he could have been at the Magna budget. There was no one there from the Liberal Party.

He talked about health care, the cuts to health care. Health care went from a \$17-billion annual budget to a \$28.5-billion annual budget. Education costs in Ontario increased exponentially under the Harris government.

There were 12,000 new nurses hired under the Harris government, something that the opposition doubts.

I want to make one comment on the member for Danforth, who talked about corporate tax cuts. I can understand it's a philosophical thing with the NDP; they don't want any corporate tax cuts. But I think you have to understand what those corporate tax cuts are. First, this government raised taxes on corporations and small businesses significantly on their election and over the first six years of their term. They raised them. If they raised them, let's say, \$1,000 per company, now they've given them \$100 back. That's not really a tax cut, is it? Not over their term. There's not one thing under their term that they can point to that costs less in Ontario rather than more. Putting the tax cut in context, it doesn't serve this government very well.

I say that my premise holds that this government is on track to double the debt of the province. They've increased the revenues by 73% when the economy only increased 9%. They have done nothing good for Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the New Democrats in this House to respond to the McGuinty government's budget that was presented last week.

The leader of our party, Andrea Horwath, had this to say when she spoke about the budget last week: that when all is said and done, this will probably be referred to as the budget that was much ado about nothing. It really is a standstill budget. Many of our needs in this province are unmet. Fundamental investments that are needed for economic growth, health, well-being and housing for the people of this province were not addressed. It was a budget that made me think there are things that are being held back for the election this fall. It will be interesting to see what plan the Liberals really do have when they bring forward their platform.

If there's one thing that is clear from this budget, it's that the McGuinty government and the Premier himself are out of touch with the pressures that are faced by recession-weary families. Ontario families are facing ongoing joblessness. Many are facing a situation where they've lost a full-time job and are now trying to make do on part-time wages or the wages from a number of part-time jobs cobbled together. They're facing soaring electricity prices related to failed nuclear policies of this government. They're facing soaring heating prices from the HST and from the failure of this government to actually push forward for energy efficiency in the natural gas sector.

We have a situation where people are finding life difficult and, clearly, this budget is not going to make it easier for them. I would say that this is a budget that continues to put the squeeze on middle-income families in Ontario. Dalton McGuinty's answer to that squeeze has been a new sales tax on people's everyday essentials and a multi-billion-dollar handout to some of Ontario's biggest and richest corporations. I don't think that's fair.

I don't think most Ontarians think that's fair, but beyond that, it also does not deliver what people need to see, and that is a healthy, sustainable economy. That is not going to come out of this budget. The McGuinty government had the opportunity with this budget to fix things, to address the issues that people are concerned with. Instead, Premier McGuinty decided to stick with the status quo. He has made extraordinary claims about the ability of corporate tax cuts to create jobs. But it's clear from the numbers in this budget that the Premier's so-called jobs strategy is not working. In fact, the whole jobs plan is in disarray. The government continues to hand over billions to corporations without any guarantee that they'll create jobs. We've been making these same criticisms for a couple of years now, so I can't say that we were surprised that the government, in this budget, in the documents, quietly reduced their job creation estimate by 75,000 jobs over the next three years. That is a very significant backing off of one's claims for the effectiveness of Dalton McGuinty's economic policies. But it was inevitable. Just doling out cash to corporations with no strings attached does not build an economy. That has been proven over and over again. But this government just doesn't seem to get it.

I was very pleased that my federal NDP leader, Jack Layton, has put together a jobs package with strings attached for any money that goes to the business sector, so that the investment of public dollars results in the jobs that people need. He has proposed incentives that reward businesses for making real investments in plant, machinery, training and jobs. If you want to have real job creation when you give money to the corporate sector, you must have strings attached. I'll return to Jack Layton's jobs package later in the speech. It's something I was very pleased to see come forward.

Of course, even though jobs are a very central part of people's concerns in Ontario, there's more in terms of their lives that they feel needs to be addressed. This government will try and hang its hat on a few items from this budget. Let's talk about a few of those.

About health care: After closing breast cancer clinics in London and forcing patients to fight for breast cancer treatments, why would anyone believe that the government all of a sudden has a breast cancer strategy? It's absurd to think that a nominal investment in breast cancer screening over three years absolves this government of anything.

Then there's education, specifically post-secondary education. Let's talk about that. When Ontario is the single most expensive province in Canada to attend university and students are carrying an average debt of \$30,000 upon graduation, why would anyone believe that this government has a plan to help families struggling with the cost of putting those kids through school? I actually think that the quote that was put forward earlier about the role of education in the future performance of economies is quite correct. Those jurisdictions that invest in education in their young people and develop a knowledge base, a skill base to actually run a sophisticated

economy, will do better in this world than others. When you continually pile debt and obligations on the backs of the young people who are taking on those skills and education, you undermine that education. You make it very difficult for people to actually take the education that they want. You put people in a position where their personal finances are a constant pressure and strain on them. That is a mistake that this government has made. That is a mistake that was not corrected in this budget.

1500

This government has announced solutions before, like a brand new courthouse in west end Toronto to help deal with the massive case backlog, which has now been abruptly scrapped. So why would we believe that the Premier will actually follow through on addressing the concerns that he has identified in his budget? There may be a plan somewhere out there, but part of what's put into this budget, which I think is part of that plan, concerns me a lot, and that's the part that's buried further in, deeper into the pages, something fairly murky and something that I think is a threat to the well-being of the delivery of public services in this province. It's the creep towards privatization of public service delivery.

In this budget, this government opens the door to American-style privatized public service delivery. If you read this budget, the only areas that supposedly are off limits are health and education. But even they could be defined or redefined creatively to allow for a substantial increase in privatization.

That model of privatization of services has not worked south of the border and it won't work here. If this government thinks it can parcel off the delivery of important public services to the private sector, then it will find significant opposition not just from New Democrats but from people right across the political spectrum in Ontario. This government needs to be very open about what it's doing with regard to service delivery. The people of Ontario deserve no less.

In the lead-up to the budget, New Democrats asked that the McGuinty government put people first. This government failed. They could have made life more affordable for families by taking the HST off of hydro and home heating. Instead, they put another \$400 million into a corporate tax giveaway. They could have ensured that front-line health services were there for families who need them. Instead, they're still cutting important health programs and services, announcing more than \$100 million in new cuts and refusing to put a hard cap on health CEO salaries. This government could have ensured that the concerns of families in northern Ontario would have been heard. But instead, they slashed the budgets of important ministries like natural resources and aboriginal affairs. For the McGuinty government, it's as if northern Ontario doesn't exist. That's how bad this budget was for northern Ontario.

Let's go into recent Ontario economic history a bit to look at why this budget is so inadequate. Between September 2008 and May 2009, 250,000 Ontarians lost their jobs. That's a quarter of a million jobs gone. In

2009 alone, the real gross domestic product of this province contracted 3.6%. The unemployment rate in places like Windsor and Oshawa spiked well into the double digits, and Toronto wasn't all that far behind. From retail to information technology, no sector was safe from what's now routinely called the great recession.

Although there are some signs of recovery on the horizon, economists are warning of a prolonged period of sluggish growth. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, and while other provinces have recovered to their pre-recession employment levels, at least 16,000 fewer Ontarians are working today than were working in 2008.

Meanwhile, real wages continue to stagnate. After inflation is taken into account, the average hourly wage hasn't changed since 1991. That is of consequence to the economic well-being of this province. If people can't buy goods and services, the economy can't move forward. You need to have purchasing power in the hands of the people of this province if we actually are going to have successful businesses, successful economic activity and successful government. This government has presided over the stagnation of the middle class in Ontario.

Most people are getting by with less or simply the same, but there are exceptions. For example, Canada's CEOs are doing better than at any time in our history. By 3 p.m. on January 1, they had already collected more in pay than the average person earns in a year.

Instead of addressing this inequality, government after government in Ontario has sacrificed fiscal capacity for corporate tax giveaways. From 1999 to today, successive Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments have handed out more than \$20 billion in business tax giveaways. Corporate profits increased 7.9% last quarter to \$66 billion. That's good news for CEOs, good news for shareholders, but it raises serious questions about the economic usefulness of the McGuinty government's multi-billion-dollar corporate tax giveaways.

As I said earlier, Ontario's record on post-recession job creation isn't as strong as that of other provinces, like Manitoba, for example. That province, with an NDP government, I might add, has put pause on further corporate tax giveaways while its provincial budget is in deficit. While Ontario remains 16,000 jobs below pre-recession peak, Manitoba has gained 15,000 jobs since the date the recession took hold. To get a real sense of where this corporate tax giveaway is going, it helps to look at one sector of Ontario's economy and see what they've done with the additional money.

The Ontario government's own budget says the corporate income tax cut will hand \$535 million to banks and \$135 million to insurance companies. I should add that those are immensely profitable corporations, immensely profitable banks and insurance companies. They're receiving that largesse on top of \$520 million already provided to banks through the elimination of the capital tax. In total, this government has announced \$4 billion in corporate and capital tax giveaways. An incredible \$1.2 billion will be pocketed by banks and insurance companies, the vast majority going to just eight

companies which dominate Ontario's financial sector. Those eight companies are Scotiabank, Royal Bank, TD Bank, Bank of Montreal, CIBC, Sun Life Financial, Manulife Financial Corp. and Great-West Life.

But interestingly, even with all this generosity on the part of the people of Ontario, all this incredible flow of funds into their coffers, all this potential for huge profit growth, in fact, in the past year, employment in the financial sector has decreased by 25,000 jobs. It doesn't sound like a good investment to me. It sounds to me like the people of Ontario, hard-pressed as they are, are putting vast amounts of money into these banks and insurance companies and actually seeing employment decrease in that sector. That being the case, how can you justify putting that kind of money into that sector?

As I have said in an earlier comment, Paul Martin brought in the biggest corporate tax cut in Canadian history when he was finance minister for Canada at the end of the last decade. The reality is that since that budget came down, we have had ongoing decline in the manufacturing sector in this country. Life has gotten harder, not better. Wages have stagnated, as I said a few minutes ago. That is not a strategy. To use an old historic commentary, George Bush the elder referred to a similar policy on the part of Ronald Reagan as "voodoo economics." If you think that simply giving away all your cash is going to bring jobs and prosperity, that is not a credible statement. Profits in that sector have increased significantly, CEOs have been awarded significant compensation increases, dividends for shareholders have been boosted, but the hiring spree never materialized.

The truth of the matter is that corporate tax rates are only one of the many factors that a business considers when making investments. Evidence shows that corporate tax giveaways have very little positive impact on job creation since they have almost no impact on business capital investment spending.

1510

Since 2000, the combined federal-Ontario corporate tax rate will have been reduced from 44% to 25%. This province should be booming. If corporate tax cuts are really the sunshine that makes an economy grow, then why have we seen stagnation of wages? Why have we seen loss of manufacturing jobs? Why have we seen loss of jobs in the financial services sector? That is a very generous cut in the tax rate for corporations in Ontario. It did not translate into economic investment, into business investment, into jobs and salaries. That's the reality.

This government has decided to continue following a policy that has shown itself not to produce the results. In fact, rather than investing in productivity—things like machinery and equipment—and creating jobs, corporations have been accumulating cash and similar liquid assets at an increasing rate. According to Statistics Canada, corporate holdings of cash and similar assets reached nearly half a trillion dollars by the third quarter of 2010. Since the beginning of the recession, businesses added \$83 billion to cash holdings.

I had the opportunity to listen to the Minister of Finance last week at the Economic Club of Canada. His

mantra continuously was “corporate tax cuts paving the way to prosperity.” If you look at the reality of the last decade, if you look at the experience in the United States, then you can only conclude that this is a strategy that has demonstrated that it is a failure, and it is a strategy pursued by this government that will simply undermine the government and society of Ontario.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker; I’m sorry. We are so used to that, but it’s nice to see you in the chair, Madam Speaker.

I had the wonderful opportunity at 7:30 this morning to attend one of the sessions on the recent budget. It was extremely well attended. We had the chambers of commerce from Vaughan, King, Aurora, Richmond Hill and Markham. It was extremely well attended. Of course, we had the people from York University as well.

I have to say that I came out of that session with the overwhelming reaction that the people loved the budget. Some people would say that this is an election budget. Perhaps it is. Maybe it is an election budget. But when you look at the content of the budget, you have to say that this is the result—and this is what came out of the session this morning: If we are doing so well, it is because of the results of the various programs put in place by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government in the past several years.

Today we are seeing why we were able to come up with a budget that still keeps the most important sectors, and I think everybody loves health care and education and jobs.

It was only maybe 18 months, a year or so ago, that we were devastated here, especially in Ontario, when we employed the largest car manufacturer in the nation. We were able to recoup 91% or 93% of the jobs lost. I think that speaks well for our economy, it speaks well for the province of Ontario, it speaks well for the people and it speaks well for us.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: I listened carefully and attentively to the member from Toronto—Danforth. We know where he’s coming from, and we understand it and we respect it. What I have the greatest difficulty with is the McGuinty government. We know—he just said it; the member who just commented just said it—that this is an election budget. What we know for certain—it’s been said at the two budget breakfasts I had. Everybody said the same thing: “There are future taxes. How are they going to pay down the deficit of \$16.8 billion?”

It also says that in 2018—2018—they’ll still be paying down the debt. The children here today will almost be in university by the time this is paid off. It’s just absolutely—here’s the greatest truth, and I’m reading right from the budget; it’s a prop, if you will. This is from the finance minister. Here’s what it says: Chaired by Don Drummond, “The commission will advise” Premier McGuinty “on more fundamental reforms—changes that

will help protect health care and education over the long term while accelerating the elimination of the deficit.”

Now, you can’t have it both ways. What he’s going to do now—interestingly enough, this blue ribbon panel from Bay Street will probably come up with a reasonable report. But, guess what? It’s going to come in after the election in October. What’s going to happen is they’re going to say, “Oh, my goodness.”

Here’s what we hear in the hallways at Queen’s Park: Don Drummond, who recommended the HST, will probably recommend just moving the HST to 15% from 13%. Tax and spend is the only Liberal policy that’s been consistent since the beginning of time. I for one encourage the people of Ontario not to be fooled this time with this McGuinty government—

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, I am going to quote from the budget document, not the budget speech, and I am going to focus my comments on the remarks of the member from Toronto—Danforth. He spoke a great deal about jobs. That is an important issue, certainly for people in any riding. When I received the budget document—it is available online, and I would encourage any Ontarian who has the time and is so inclined to go online and read the budget, because that has really important, good and accurate information.

The information I’m going to point them to first is a chart on page 158. It’s a chart with information from Statistics Canada, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics. Very clearly, there’s a diagram there which identifies that in the United States since the recession they’ve recovered about 14.5% of their jobs; in the United Kingdom, about 38.9%; and in Ontario, we have recovered fully 90.9% of the jobs that were lost. That’s from StatsCan.

Another interesting chart, if you flip to page 160: Ontario has also fared well compared to most other provinces and US states. Since May 2009, Ontario employment has grown 3.6% above that of other large Canadian provinces and well ahead of all comparable US states, some of which continue to see declines—and these are the jurisdictions we compete with. Those statistics are from StatsCan and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, so very impartial, independent bodies that have provided these charts included in our budget document. It’s very interesting reading. I recommend it to the member for Toronto—Danforth.

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It’s a pleasure to join the two-minute responses to the member from Toronto—Danforth. The member spoke at length about several issues: jobs and growth, education, health care, mentioned the north and talked about the private sector. I thought I’d just make a few comments on each of those areas in the minute and a half that I have.

The jobs and growth section: \$1.3 billion of new investment with private sector partners will happen as a result of this budget, including nearly \$175 million from

the government to create and retain nearly 10,000 jobs. That includes over 30 clean energy manufacturers who have or will set up in Ontario, which is quite significant. I thought we'd hear from some independent parties. For instance, when we talked about jobs and the economy, which the member from Toronto–Danforth did, the Ottawa Citizen says, "Ontario's budget is a thoughtful response to a difficult problem, most of which has been caused by circumstances rather than policy...."

"The Duncan budget is a considered one in that it recognizes the problems of health care and the danger of taking stimulus away too quickly from a badly damaged Ontario economy."

1520

In terms of the north and health care, the Sault Star ran a comment saying:

"This money is much more than a goody.

"Lives will be saved and the quality of life for countless women, regardless of financial means, will be improved with more accessible breast screening."

Finally, I thought I would address the member's comments about reducing the deficit, and share with the House an editorial from the Toronto Star:

"Given the short-term, partisan politicking that was the hallmark of the federal Conservative government's budget last week, it is particularly refreshing that Premier Dalton McGuinty has chosen to continue to govern for the long term rather than switch to election mode....

"It's high time for Hudak to do the same."

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That was an interesting series of comments. My thanks to the members from York West and Durham, the Minister of Education and the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I think that the Minister of Finance did refer to it as an election budget. I don't think he was messing around when he said that; he was quite serious.

I want to say, Minister of Education, that I think you're quite correct. I've been asked before by reporters on television panels, "How do I decide which of you is telling the truth?" Strangely enough, I've said, "Read the budget. Take a look." When you look at this budget, if you look at the pages that you referred to regarding the comparison between the United States, the UK and Ontario in retention or regaining of jobs, what's most interesting to me is that the United States is the jurisdiction that went on the biggest tax-cutting splurge of all at the beginning of this last decade. Under George W. Bush, there were extraordinary tax cuts that imperilled the financial stability of the United States, tax cuts that have been continued. Those tax cuts, I'd argue, similar on a larger scale to the corporate tax cuts that are being put in place here, feed speculation, increase the holding of wealth at the very top points of society and undermine the ability of ordinary working families to actually buy the services and goods they need to live their lives. It undermines what an economist would call the domestic

market. I look at this graph. I know that in the United States those tax cuts created a bubble economy which imploded—no surprise that the jobs aren't regained. We are in danger of going down the same path.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: During this 20-minute segment, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa Centre.

At the outset, I'd just like to remind viewers that you can see the entire budget online at www.fin.gov.on.ca.

I'd like to start by saying I'm going to speak about the budget for 2011-12 and what a difference it's making in the fast-growing and dynamic communities such as I represent in Mississauga, all around the city of Toronto. This 905 belt, as it's known by its dominant landline area code, defines both the strengths and the needs of the people who live and work there. This is composed of such cities as, of course, my home of Mississauga, of Brampton, Oakville, Vaughan, Woodbridge and nearly two dozen other communities, all of which are not only an hour's drive or less from the metro Toronto borders, but all of which are defined by a real vibrancy and growth. Businesses there, large and small, are all world-class businesses; they all trade abroad. For them, the notion that trade means doing business with the United States—many of those people have come from outside Canada, outside North America, and that doesn't translate. They're interested in doing business wherever the business is. That's why this budget was important to those people.

This is a budget that continues important work that's in progress. Starting with Open Ontario in 2009-10, Ontario set our province's unique strength to work in the 21st century. We need our strengths working in a global context. This budget of 2011-12 extends the tax reforms that removed, for example, the dead weight of a cold war tax relic. By that, of course, I mean the old provincial sales tax. I think it's worth reminding Ontarians about what a bad, ineffective, expensive and inefficient job-killing tax that they're finally, firmly, permanently rid of.

The PST was expensive. It taxed and retaxed and retaxed the same thing multiple times over. Especially in our area, in the 905 belt, for manufacturers with long supply chains, this would mean that things that people consumed in their businesses, whether it would be tools or supplies or office furnishings or equipment, all of those things were taxed. Then that tax had to be built into the price that you passed along to the next person. That was built into the price that you passed to the next person, the next person and the next person.

Let's just imagine a business that had five or six steps in the supply chain, and that's not many. Let's suppose that 1% of your total business costs—in many businesses, it's more—was embedded sales tax. So your suppliers have 1% embedded in what they sell you in raw materials or in parts or in things that you use. And your business has 1% imbedded in it, and you pass that along to another one who would be your wholesaler, who will pass it

along to a distributor, who will pass it along to a retailer, where you will buy it. It's not like you're paying an 8% PST; you're probably paying somewhere between 12% and, in some cases, 30% and 40%. All the province of Ontario ever wanted was 8%, and now that's what we can get. That's the difference that making that change made.

The PST was inefficient. A single transaction had been subject to two different taxes at two separate rates collected by two sets of bureaucrats. Ontario is able to phase out some 1,250 taxation-related men and women who've served the province very well. But we were able to harmonize and streamline those jobs. Also, we no longer have two different and incompatible sets of rules. Something like about that much documentation is now gone forever—just not used, because it's one tax, one set of rules.

This budget builds on the abolition of that expensive, inefficient, outdated and no-longer-needed Cold War relic.

When you listen to radio and television or you look at print ads, how do you know this is being passed through to you? Look for the code language, something that says, "And, for a limited time only, we pay the HST." That's retail-speak. Let me take you, as a former marketing guy, into the boardrooms, and let's translate what "And, for a limited time only, we pay the HST" means. What it means, as you're discussing this internally, is the following: "Look, we're saving money because we don't have to pay 8% tax on everything that we use in our business, and we're going to pass that tax through to the customers—not because we're particularly altruistic but because, if we don't do it, our competition has figured this out, as we have, and they know that they can make as much or more money than they did before with a lower price, and besides, if our competition is cutting their price and we don't, then they're going to take our business, and we won't get it back. However, we're going to pass it through as a discount rather than a price reduction, but our next model and our new stuff will say 'new and improved,' and it's going to boast a lower price." While people have inventory they're going to say, "And, for a limited time only, we pay the HST." When the new stuff comes out, people will be saying, "At a new lower price."

Businesses can lower their price, and they can maintain their earnings and profits because their costs are down and their taxes are down. That's why your prices are down on many products: carpets and tiles, a lot of building materials and especially cars. The region of Peel estimates the savings to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon taxpayers at some \$13 million per year in vehicle fleet purchases and services alone.

So if this tax harmonization is the best way to go, then you'd think the whole world would want to do taxation on consumption in this way, wouldn't you? If you answered yes, you'd be right. Rather than list the 140-plus jurisdictions that successfully save people and businesses money and create jobs and build prosperity with a value-added tax like the Ontario harmonized sales tax, let's do

the opposite. Let's list the places that don't: Central Africa, Burma, parts of South Asia, Greenland and the United States of America. With the United States sending more than a trillion dollars abroad each year to other countries that use the wealth of ordinary Americans to work against the United States of America, it is possible that Americans might land on a Canadian-style national value-added tax sooner rather than later.

1530

But in the meantime, our Canadian dollar continues to gain against the US dollar, and you think, is that good or bad? Well, it's good if you're buying stuff from the United States, but if you're a manufacturer, it's offset by the price advantage of doing business in Canada due to lower taxes and lower business costs. In the 905 region this means our manufacturing firms are poised to recover strongly as the USA starts its recovery. We're seeing it already.

Here in Ontario we run a lean government with a well-regulated financial sector. In fact, the 300,000 people who work in the financial sector in Ontario make that sector one of Ontario's competitive advantages. Banks and other financial institutions here have been saved from their own excesses by a regulatory system that kept Ontarians from pouring their money into bad investments, as happened all over the world. As an example, Ireland, the Celtic Tiger, is now down to just two banks. Our Ontario-based banks—and that's all of them in Canada—are the type of good investment that make a depositor's money safe. They offer good returns on their shares to ordinary Ontarians who want to save their money and earn a good return on their savings.

Interjection: Jim Flaherty knows that.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As one of my colleagues said, the Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, knows that. In fact, permanent cuts to personal income taxes will mean that for the 2010 tax year, which is the one that we're all filling out right now, taxes will be reduced on average by about \$200 for 93% of Ontario income taxpayers. Wow, not bad—the elimination of Ontario personal income tax for about 90,000 lower-income taxpayers.

I'm sure my colleague has a lot more to say on this, but I've appreciated the opportunity to discuss some of the differences that Ontario's budget will make.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this budget, and thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his presentation on the tax implications in terms of our growing economy.

We have all been talking about and insisting that the viewers out there read the budget. I think it's a great idea. Instead of hearing the rhetoric from the opposition parties, it's good to read the actual document. It's fairly easy to read. I often hear from people about transparency and accountability and making sure this kind of information is available to them. It is a fairly decent-sized document, and there's a simpler website address which

one can go to. It's ontario.ca/budget, and you can get this whole document to read. I encourage folks to read it.

I have to say that I had a great opportunity to talk to a lot of people in my riding of Ottawa Centre over the weekend about this budget, and by and large I received very positive feedback. I receive positive feedback about this budget because people are starting to see that the economy is turning around. People are starting to see that we are creating and regaining jobs back in the province. And what people were especially happy about in my riding is the very strong stance the McGuinty government has taken through this budget in making sure that outlining its priority in terms of protecting public services is as clear as it gets; that at no cost will the McGuinty government not protect its public services. We will ensure that our health care and our education and our schools and our hospitals are there for all Ontarians. People in my riding really have appreciated that very firm commitment that it is a balanced budget, that it is a prudent budget, that it makes a very important commitment. The few new initiatives that are included in this budget are very strategic in nature, are very focused on really important things.

One in particular that I heard a lot about is the new investment in the mental health and addictions strategy. I received kudos all around from my community. I was at the opening of the Youth Services Bureau, a youth drop-in centre, on Friday in my riding. The Youth Services Bureau is a fantastic organization working with youth on a lot of different issues, but in particular dealing with mental health and addictions issues. Person after person came to me and spoke to me about being appreciative about the government's investment; I think it's about \$257 million over three years on the mental health and addictions strategy, starting with children and youth. There was a great recognition that the government was really stepping up to the plate and making those very important and strategic investments.

In fact, I was there at the Youth Services Bureau for the opening of the youth drop-in centre because it was a beneficiary of the stimulus funding as well. I think the province had invested over \$250,000 in that centre, which is vital for our young people, especially our street youth, so that they have very good services available to them. I was very happy to see the kind of investment being made, through the stimulus funding, in community infrastructure that will benefit, for years and years to come, our young generation.

I can speak to many investments that we've been making in Ottawa. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$1 billion in transit and transportation for the city of Ottawa, and that does not include the \$600 million that we are investing for a new light rail train system in the city, not to mention that we have been uploading since 2003 all the services that were downloaded by the Harris government, things like ODSP, the Ontario disability support program; Ontario Works; land ambulances; and public health. The uploading that is taking place from the province through the city of Ottawa has resulted in an

increase of revenue for the city of Ottawa by \$140 million annually. That has been increasing every year. That's a net benefit of about 14% in terms of property taxes to the city of Ottawa.

In addition, for the stimulus funding we invested about \$400 million across the city, including building and renovating new arenas, community centres, access to libraries, and building new roads and bridges: very key investments in public infrastructure and community infrastructure.

I'm also very proud of the investment of \$189 million in the Ottawa Convention Centre, which, by the way, opens in eight days. If you haven't been to Ottawa lately, please come and visit this beautiful brand new convention centre, which is a provincial crown corporation. I want to commend the Minister of Tourism, who's right there, who made that very crucial investment in our convention centre, which is now booked solid for two years, to the point that we don't have enough hotel rooms to accommodate all the visitors who will be coming to the city of Ottawa. We are extremely proud of this team. So thank you, Minister Chan, for that investment. I know you're coming to Ottawa for the opening.

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A big round of applause for the minister for really believing in Ottawa and making that crucial investment which will result in new jobs and more economic growth in the city of Ottawa.

Most importantly, I want to mention the more than \$600 million of capital funding investment in our local hospitals: CHEO; the new regional cancer centre on the general campus at the Ottawa Hospital and the Queensway Carleton centre; the doubling of Montfort—this is the only French teaching hospital in all of Ontario, which the Harris government would have closed. We saved it, and we have doubled it in size so that more people are getting health care services in the French language in the city of Ottawa. Thank you, McGuinty government, for believing in the city.

1540

It's the same thing with the cardiac unit at CHEO. That was going to get closed under the previous Harris government, which conveniently gets forgotten by my friends from the opposition. We saved that program when the McGuinty government came into office in 2003.

This is a budget in the right direction. We are making investments in things that are important to all Ontarians; that is, our education system and our health care system. I get so many questions about our education system, making sure that we continue to make the investments in our young people.

Just because we had a recession does not mean that our children should stop learning. Just because we had a recession does not mean that those who are sick, especially our seniors and elderly, do not get quality health care. We will continue to invest in our vital public services, while at the same time driving toward balancing the budget. But our government is not going to balance the budget on the backs of cutting and slashing vital

public services like health care and education. That is not what Ontarians want. That is not what I hear in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

People want to make sure that full-day kindergarten is available to all four- and five-year-olds in the city of Ottawa. We are extremely proud that we are adding another 200 schools starting in September 2011. In my riding, I've got already got two schools: Cambridge Street Public School and W.E. Gowling. We'll have Connaught Public School, and then I've got, I think, five or six more schools coming online in September 2012. Parents keep asking me, "When are the other schools going to come in place?" That's the kind of investment we need to make to ensure that we have quality of life, and that is extremely important.

All of our families—every Ontarian works very hard. They work hard and pay their taxes to ensure that they have the quality of life they so well deserve, which means good health care and good education, and that is what this budget is focused on. It does not have all kinds of goodies for every kind of cause; of course not, because the times do not allow for that. But what it has is very targeted, strategic investments, things like risk management programs for our farmers so they can continue to feed us. I'm very proud that we have a lot of local markets in my riding of Ottawa Centre. We continue to buy local foods, and we allow farmers to continue to grow.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to hear that the member from Ottawa—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Centre.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —Centre—thank you—was out in his riding listening to people. I also had that opportunity this weekend. We had our home show that the Lions put on. Thousands of people came and spoke to me. I am not exaggerating when I say that not one person asked me about the budget. What they did ask me about was the ever-increasing hydro bills. They asked me how they're going to continue to afford to stay in their homes. They asked me when the McGuinty government is coming up for re-election, because they'd really like an opportunity to vote on that. But not one person was talking about the Ontario budget, which leads you to two decision points: Were they not talking about it because there wasn't much in it? Yes, I think that's the case. There really wasn't a lot of detail in this budget. They didn't have anything that they could actually discuss.

Now, I will give credit where credit is due. Obviously, I'm very pleased that you were talking about child and youth mental health. I'm thrilled that that's actually in the budget. I need to have some clarification on exactly where the money is going to come and flow through. There are some decisions on whether that's through the education system, children and youth, or the Ministry of Health. I'll give credit where credit is due. I'm happy to see that moving forward.

But I did not have any discussions, any questions on the Ontario budget from last Tuesday—what they liked

about it and what they didn't like about it—because there was nothing there to discuss. I think that's what we're finding when we go out into our ridings. It's just an indication that it's much to-do about nothing, I'm afraid.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Where do I begin on this budget? Well, let's start. No poverty issues in here. Nothing about pensions. Nothing about HST relief. Nothing about the environment. The 600,000 jobs that they've been touting in here for months and years, and the 50,000 green venture jobs: not happening.

If you want to come to Hamilton—since 2007, you've lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs. You've brought a few medical jobs to Hamilton, and you've brought a few possible, in a year or two, solar panel jobs that may add up to a couple of hundred jobs, if they happen. I'm short about 19,600 jobs in Hamilton, so when I hear more about that, I'm going to be a much happier camper.

The Liberals talk about all the things they're going to do, and every time they talk about them, they end up being a bunch of broken promises. I've sat and watched them for years; for 15 years, I've watched them. Everything is wonderful and hunky-dory; the member from Ottawa Centre just stood and talked about how everybody loves it. Nobody loves it. The reason they're not talking about it is because there's nothing in it. That's the problem.

They dealt a little bit with agriculture; they did a little bit about screening; they did a little bit about this. But the main issues—HST, poverty, environment, jobs and all the things that are affecting the daily income of the people of Ontario—have not been dealt with, and they won't be dealt with in this budget.

As they say, I guess we'll leave it up to the people of Ontario to decide if they got a good deal or not. But from my perspective and from where I'm from, believe me, the Liberals are in big trouble, because there's nothing in that budget to help the people of Hamilton.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm on a roll. I'm standing for the second time today for two minutes. That's a good record.

Let me say that I appreciate very much the comments from the members for the wonderful cities of Mississauga—Streetsville and Ottawa Centre, as well as my colleague on the other side from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I'm speaking to my constituents and anyone else who would like to get not only the English but the French version of the document as well. It is available. It can be obtained through our offices. It can be obtained directly on the Web. I would say: Get a copy, because there is a lot of good stuff in this budget.

If this is not declared an election budget, I'd like to make it one because I know it's good for the people of Ontario and I know it's good for the people in York West, especially when we address, for the very first time, a very large issue. I know we have a lot of people, young people, with mental issues. There is a part in here for

seniors and all the others who are in need and are using the Ontario drug benefit program. There is good stuff in there for them.

But we have to look around and say that people are working. When the people are working, they don't complain so much. We have been opening up schools; we have been opening up hospitals. We have been making improvements all over the place. When we do that, we don't hear too many complaints from people.

Yes, there are some areas where people say, "I'm paying a bit more for hydro." But let's put everything in perspective. All around, I believe that the government has been doing a good job, and this is a good budget, and let's keep it that way.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the comments this afternoon on the budget motion by the member for Mississauga–Streetsville and the member for Ottawa Centre. I'm not sure which of them is going to respond, but I want to ask a question, and I hope that one of them will answer this question.

If we look at the budget papers document—of course, this is the document that is given to us on the day of the budget. This is the government's document; it's put out by the Ministry of Finance. If you look at page 205, you will see Ontario's so-called plan to eliminate the deficit. As we know, the government is compelled, with each budget—if it's presenting a deficit budget, like this one is, they have to produce a plan as to how they're going to balance the budget over a period of years. This so-called plan to eliminate the deficit would show, if we believe the government, that they are on track to balancing the budget by 2017-18. But of course, the Ministry of Finance gives us the provisions that will be necessary, the assumptions that are necessary, in order to achieve that. If you look at the document, it says that they will need to hold growth in program expenses to an average of 1% between 2010-11 and 2013-14.

1550

How is the government going to hold its program expenses to less than 1% on average over that period of time? I'd like to hear the explanation as to how that's going to happen, especially when you consider the track record of the McGuinty Liberal government going back to 2003, when its overall spending increases have been substantially more than that, more in the range of 6% to 8% a year. In more recent times, if we look at the total expense increase from, say, 2008-09, it goes up \$12 billion to 2009-10. The next year, it goes up \$7 billion, far in excess of 1%. We know this is a goal that is completely unachievable under this government. I would ask these members to explain how they're possibly going to do this.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Dufferin–Caledon, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek,

York West and Wellington–Halton Hills for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

Let me just add a few words to my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon. People will stay in their homes because their tax reductions and credits more than offset those things that have caused a price increase. In fact, the Toronto-Dominion Bank in a very recent report says two thirds of the savings from the harmonized sales tax are already in the hands of the consumer.

To my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who said that he couldn't find any of the tax relief, let's just give you a list of them: the Ontario child benefit, the northern Ontario energy credit, the permanent new sales tax credit, the transition tax relief, the energy and property tax credit, the 10% reduction on electricity bills. He and his party keep saying, "Lower them 8%." We did one better: We lowered them 10%. And more importantly, the senior homeowner tax credit to help our folks stay in their homes, and finally, the children's activity tax credit. If there is anything in here, it's a multitude of ways in which Ontario families can save money.

To my colleague from York West, he gets it. His constituents know that it's not how you compare against the Almighty, which is why they keep re-electing him, it's how you compare against the alternative.

Finally, to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, our government managed to find a surprise \$5.5-billion deficit when first elected in 2003-04. And ahead of schedule, we balanced the budget and ran three consecutive surpluses. As to the assumptions in the current budget document, later this year the Auditor General of Ontario will tell us whether he believes or disbelieves those very assumptions.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Some of the members on the government side, the McGuinty members, have clearly been reading the briefing notes they've been given and following the script very closely. What we're trying to do here is actually bring some light to it. If a person thinks they should be happy with a \$16-billion deficit, then they really haven't read the document. Here's the document. I've read it, and if there are some questions, I'd be happy to help people on the government side—who haven't read it or they would be outraged.

Here's the budget bill. Most of the members are still perhaps working through the paperwork. This is Bill 173; that's actually the budget bill. When you look at it, you'll see there are 146 pages, 41 schedules. If somebody over there says they've actually read it, there are probably some questions left to be answered.

I'll say to you that if you do read it, you'll see that there are so many small, seemingly insignificant subtleties in this bill that you would be quite frightened—and you will be surprised.

I think what's most important—let's look at the other document that I think is part of the discussion. This is the document that I'm referring to now, the actual document that preceded the budget. This is from the Standing

Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the prebudget consultations. I participated. A lot of members had the chance to participate in them; I have for 15 or 16 years. These are very important.

In this section here, there were 288 presenters, many talking about affordable housing, many talking about poverty, many talking about the aging community. There is a list of recommendations from each of the sectors that I have here that shows that this budget clearly is like wallpapering a wall that has mildew on it. It isn't fixed.

The hard-working people of Ontario, the families who are out of work or can't pay their hydro bill or their auto insurance or pay tuition for students that's the highest in Canada, are all sweating while the members over here are drinking fine wines and dining on the tax dollar. This is what I see and what I think, and that's what the people of Ontario are frustrated with. Eight years of bloat is what we've gotten.

I look at the clippings for today. How do the writers of the province of Ontario feel? I'm not making this up. I'm going to read the first one: "Home Care Sees Too Little Cash, Critics Say."

What's the biggest problem in Ontario? Health care. What's the biggest problem? The aging population. What's the biggest problem? Long-term care. There are no beds. What's the biggest problem in hospitals? The alternate-level-of-care bed blockers. Nobody can get into the beds because there's someone with a chronic disease who they can't discharge because there are no beds for them.

The McGuinty solution? Create regulation of retirement homes. What is a retirement home? There's not one cent of McGuinty dollars in those retirement homes. That's to take all the money from the hard-working, aging people in this province—\$4,000 to \$6,000 a month to stay in a retirement home that's regulated. That's their solution.

If you look at the annual funding for health care in your budget, it's about 1.9%. What has the average growth in health care funding been? It has been 6% and 7%.

I look at all of the people we see on the streets suffering from mental illness. It has been complete neglect. If it wasn't for the member from Whitby—Oshawa, this government would have done nothing about that. Christine Elliott forced them to do something about that.

What did they do on the agricultural piece? Nothing, in my view. They said they've done something. It's an insurance plan where the agricultural community is paying.

I get so upset when I start going through these documents and realize the real truth of what's going on. I don't want to be part of it. It's got to be said, and so I'm going to say some of it now.

Here's one of the sections of the report. I'm reading from the report filed to the Minister of Finance. Did he listen? The report's title is *The McGuinty Government: A Threat to Ontario Families*. I'll just read a couple of sections.

Here's one. This isn't a quote of mine. This is a quote from a person out there, perhaps one of my constituents

or one of their constituents. This is a constituent, not a politician with something they're trying to sell. I hope they're listening. It was recorded on December 2, 2010, from an Ontario resident—Ontario Legislative Assembly, Hansard transcript. I'm reading word for word:

"I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%.... What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock?..."

"A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to the HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match any of this."

Out-of-pocket health care expenses paid by middle-class households—this is when they delisted drugs and delisted services, whether it's getting your eyes tested or your hearing tested—have increased 43% in the last 10 years.

1600

"Direct costs increased by 38% while health insurance premiums soared by 53%," as has tuition.

They try to forget that what they first got elected on was a deception, when they said that they wouldn't raise your taxes and raised the taxes—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: An error-filled statement.

I withdraw that. I have to rephrase it, more importantly.

They increased the health tax, which takes in \$3 billion to \$4 billion more a year. I can't believe—now I know how this person feels.

I'm wondering if somehow or another, Premier McGuinty has changed. He used to be reasonably caring; he maybe didn't handle the truth carefully, but he often looked as if he cared. Now he's going around with almost a smile, and the people of Ontario are hurting. Let's at least remember that and acknowledge that they're hurting. Whether it's auto insurance, home heating, medication, long-term care—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. Stop the clock. The members from the government side will have a chance to respond to the member in short order. But you can't respond to that which you don't hear, so I would ask for order on all sides.

Thank you. Continue, member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: If there is something I said that has offended them, if it was the truth, I'm not sorry. But if it wasn't the truth, I'm sorry.

Here's the real issue, though: If you go on, it says that a TD—that's where Don Drummond runs the place. Here's what it says: "A TD Economics Special Report, dated February 9, 2011, warns that excessive household debt in Ontario results in greater vulnerability than in many other regions of the country. The report highlights an important distinction between Ontario and the rest of

Canada, where increased borrowing is for purposes other than financing a home purchase, but rather for things such as home renovations and basic consumption.

“Personal bankruptcy figures for Ontario reveal that in the first nine months of 2010, 37,462 residents declared personal bankruptcy,” and a further 22,000, it goes on to say, people are being left behind—

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: Just please listen. Some of you should actually cross the floor. I can’t understand why you’re backing this. You’re standing in favour of hollowing out Ontario. We’re now a have-not province. It’s so discouraging.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Peterborough.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: Take some control, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. John O’Toole: I can hardly get a word in edgewise.

I would say that I understand, first of all—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough again.

Mr. John O’Toole: I understand that they’re in trouble; I fully understand that. Let’s start with the simple things they can understand. Check your hydro bill. Check how you’re actually accounting for the revenue in hydro. You’re not even reporting the revenue honestly.

The strategic debt retirement fund—SDRM—you actually have not accounted for the money in revenue. Where has the money gone?

Then I look at the other report I got the other day on the \$100,000 club. That report is six times as big as it was when you started. We’re paying more, we’re getting less. The people of Ontario will not be fooled again. It’s so disheartening.

On our side, our leader, Tim Hudak, was almost tearful in his lecture to us about being accountable and being transparent and standing up for the people of Ontario, and having some respect for the people of Ontario. That’s what he says. For once in a while, please—some of the ministers are actually here today. I’m surprised they haven’t left.

But the real point being—I’m just going by the newspaper clippings: “The Waiting Game”—this is talking about health care waiting. That’s the next column. “The Cost of Drugs: Breaking the Bank to Stay Alive”—that’s the catastrophe in the drug plans. That’s what that one’s about. “LCBO Blows Off Beer.” These are the titles. I won’t use the next title; it’s less than appropriate for the place. But my point being, it’s what I hear. I hear it in the coffee shops; I hear it at the budget breakfasts I’ve had for the last two or three days. Ironically, the company—I want to thank them personally—that provided the budget breakfast, the post-budget breakfast—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister of Education, I won’t say it again.

Mr. John O’Toole: We invited the broader public. They were all there. In fact, the Premier quoted one of the things I said today. I’m not totally negative—well, mostly negative but not totally. But here’s the point: Do you know how the presenters—I won’t quote the accountant. A qualified, respected chartered accountant stood up and he had the budget with him, and he said, “You know, we’ve spent, our firm”—which is a very highly regarded firm in all of the GTA. He said, “This looks like an election budget to me.” How right he was. How insightful he was. He said, “There’s no tax increases or decreases here. They’ve assigned Don Drummond the task to figure out how to pay off the deficit.” That’s what he said.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: I said it earlier today. It’s clear, too, that even Don Drummond, in his defence, warned Premier McGuinty and the finance minister—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Dwight Duncan.

Mr. John O’Toole: He warned me that Ontario is in a structural deficit. What that means is chronic overspending. Like right now, the deficit is around about—their own purpose deficit. Here’s another piece of information: Their own purpose deficit—that’s their own book deficit—shows at \$16.7 billion; okay? Now, that isn’t the total deficit. Oh, no, no, no. Most of the deficit is off book. Most of the deficit is the WSIB. Theirs is about \$11 billion or \$12 billion extra. The other deficits are all the hospitals, including Jeff Leal’s hospital in Peterborough, where he wrote them a check for \$8 million last week, which was to pay the severance for the 163 nurses.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: In your two minutes, you can respond. It’s my time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Speaker: He is absolutely false in that accusation because it was for training.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. The Speaker is standing, the member from Durham. The member from Peterborough knows that is not a point of order.

We’ll continue, member from Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I would ask the member to clarify. If my number was a little inaccurate, I’d ask him to stand and clarify because all the hospitals are suffering. Long-term-care homes. Children’s aid society, be on notice: You’re all going to be merged. Children’s aids are all going to be merged and amalgamated, collapsed. You really have no consistent plan. They’re chopping off arms and legs of the society to make it through to the election in October so that they can then make the debt double and triple.

One of our critics, Mr. Chudleigh, said earlier today that the debt—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could you refer to the riding, please, the member from Durham? Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Halton.

Mr. John O'Toole: Halton. Haldimand, that's Toby. Pardon me.

Actually, I have some interesting things here that will help clarify for the other members. Here's the real thing on the debt. You've referred readers to the pages. Here's one here. Read page 297: "Total Debt"—actually, the total spending; this is the way to start this. The total spending in 2003, when you took over, was \$70 billion. Total spending today is \$125 billion.

Ask yourselves, is it any better? I'd say there are lots of holes in the ground that are empty. The debt was \$136 billion in 2003. What is it today? It's \$257 billion. That's the debt. Now, that's not all of it. No, no, a lot of it—I believe that Don Drummond will figure it out. I hope he eventually tells the truth. Here's the deal: The debt is probably, I think, close to \$300 billion right now.

What does this say to our children here? The debt servicing charge today—that's the interest on the debt—is just over \$10 billion. It's the fourth largest expenditure outside of capital.

1610

We all know that interest is quite low now, because that's how you stimulate the economy: Keep money cheap. Well, when you flush out the economy—all these deficits and that, increased overspending—interest will always go up. Interest always has to exceed inflation. If you put too much money into the economy, it creates inflation, and interest always has to be higher than inflation; it's an old economic rule. Every one-point increase in interest is half a billion dollars of annual penalty. And who are you paying it to? You're probably paying it to Americans or people in other countries.

I remain worried about Ontario. The only thing I'm impressed with is that I believe the people of Ontario have caught on. They can't spend their way out of the problem. Bob Rae, the Liberal leader—well, he's not the leader yet; he's just going to wait till Ignatieff is finished. He'll probably run for leader of the Liberals, which is fine—I know it's a different topic.

Here's the deal. I was on the budget committee in 1993-94, when Bob Rae was going over the cliff slowly. He had a parachute, but he was going over the cliff. The budget was \$48 billion; the deficit was \$12 billion. That's 25%. Their deficit here right now is getting close to 20%. The debt to GDP is about 35%; it's 35.4% debt to GDP. That means that 30% of all the growth in the economy is taken up paying off your debt; that's what it means.

Bob Rae had a very important thing. It was called the social contract. If you look at public sector spending—the \$125 billion total spending I mentioned in here—about 75% of that is public sector wages and benefits. Then you look at that \$100,000-a-year list. Imagine the head of Hydro One making \$900,000 a year. What are

they doing? They contract out most of the stuff that's being done. Then I look at some of the hospitals. Honest to goodness, there's a hospital in Peterborough where the former—the guy didn't even work last year and got \$348,000 for not even showing up. My goodness. And they aren't even angry about it. I'm just perplexed.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's tragic.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it's tragic.

There are other really interesting tables in here that help. I know that the people on the government side haven't read it. I know that for a fact from their speeches. They have no respect. The taxpayers have to pay this off—these young people here, the students in university, when the jobs are not here. I can't think for one moment of a good thing in the budget, honest to God. If they get up in their two minutes, I want them to list them. It will take you less than half a minute to do it.

But here's the point: I am seriously disappointed. This budget addresses nothing more than trying not to declare the damage until the patient has died. That's the problem. You can't recover if you aren't first willing to admit that you've made a mistake and fallen down. Start to listen to the people of Ontario, and you'll do the right thing. If you don't start listening soon, the people will give you your walking papers.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham. He's always animated and very passionate about his—he seems to get a rise out of the other side of the House very quickly.

I would just like to say that when I came here four years ago, I remember the finance minister standing up and scolding the official opposition on more than one occasion about the deficit they had left them, which was \$5 billion, I believe. You ask yourself now, why is there nothing in this budget for poverty, pensions, jobs, HST relief, the environment, the 600,000 imaginary jobs—they've now lowered that to 500,000—the 50,000 green venture jobs not happening, all the promises that again are not happening? And you say to yourself, "Well, here's a party that threw stones at the official opposition for their \$5-billion deficit, yet they live in a glass house." I think we're closing in on \$20 billion. I'd have to say—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We didn't hide anything.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, there's a member saying they didn't hide anything. That's information. I believe the Samsung deal, which I got and asked for, and we had to go through freedom of information to get—90% of it's blacked out. There's no financial details in there on the deal, and I believe the deal was \$7 billion. So when they talk about accountability, there is absolutely no accountability over there unless they're forced into it, unless they're caught, unless we ask them for information that they won't even give to government members.

It's absolutely disgusting, what goes on over there, and the public are catching on. I think next October they're going to send a very strong message to that government about accountability, and it certainly is going to

open some eyes over there. I think it already has, because they look extremely nervous.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to make a few remarks on the somewhat inflammatory comments of the member from Durham.

In York region we had a budget breakfast this morning. It was sponsored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce and the Markham Board of Trade. The room was absolutely packed. We had representatives from all spheres of business. We had some of the titans of industry and development in York region. We had medium- and small-sized businesses. My colleagues and I from York region went through the budget, outlining the four major areas that, of course, are so well expressed in it. In other words, our focus on jobs and the economy; the health care promotion that we're seeing in this budget; protecting education, advancing education; and also managing responsibly, which clearly the business community understands very, very well.

The only questions that we had from the business community, in fact, were on the balanced approach that we had instituted in this budget. The business community wanted to be reassured that our whole tax package would remain as stated in the budget. And we were able to say, yes, indeed, we were totally committed to the entire package: cuts on business taxes, a huge advantage in stimulating the economy and creating jobs, the infrastructure provisions that are in the budget. It was extraordinarily well received. My constituents over the weekend had the same view. We're really confident that this is the way for Ontario to turn the corner and move forward.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to congratulate the member from Durham, who talks so passionately about what has happened to this great province. He sees, he understands, that Ontario today is not the Ontario of yesteryear.

Ontario today is a have-not province, and that "have-not-iveness"—if that's a word—is growing in leaps and bounds. It's 142% greater this year than it was last year. We've moved up in our welfare payments this year—\$2.5 billion. The Liberals have a fancy formula which, if you read it quick and don't think too much about it, says it doesn't matter, but it does matter. If this continues, you know that Ontario will become a much poorer province. We'll lose jobs. People emigrate out of Ontario to other parts of Canada where they can make a better living, and as that trend continues, this province gets weaker. It's an indicator, and it's not an indicator that any sane, sensible government would ever ignore. I would look on it as a canary in a coal mine. A have-not province is a canary. It's on its last gasp, and that's a warning. It's a warning that danger is approaching.

There are all kinds of warning signs: our unemployment numbers, our emigration numbers and people

leaving Ontario for other parts. A have-not province—that's a warning sign; a growing deficit, growing debt. The trends that you see in this government are not healthy trends. It's a danger, and anyone who reads those numbers will know it's a danger. Don Drummond knows it's a danger, and I'm rather disappointed that this government, who can't bring themselves in their credibility to raise taxes, has hired this guy to raise taxes for them.

1620

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I found the comments to be very interesting. I think Ontarians understand that during the middle of the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the choice facing Ontario, as faced most other governments, was, do we borrow the money or not borrow the money? Sometimes the options to not borrowing the money led to consequences far worse than borrowing the money.

I know that on this side of the House I have the privilege of serving with a group of people who love balanced budgets. We ran a surplus three years in a row, even after finding a \$5.5-billion structural deficit. So you ask yourself, can this government pay down a structural \$16.3-billion deficit? We've done it before. We'll do it again. We will return Ontario to a balanced budget. We'll generate a sustainable surplus. And just as we did during the past several years leading up to 2008, money used from the surpluses will pay down the long-term debt.

Among the things that Ontario has developed during the recession has been the renewable energy sector, something that we wish the federal government would recognize as being as important to the province of Ontario and the 13 million people who live here as the petrochemical industry is to the province of Alberta. I think they should be treating both of those industries the same. We're not asking for special treatment; we're asking for the same treatment.

We feel the same way about equalization. Don't tell Ontarians that we're a have-not province when four fifths of the money sent to the rest of Canada to be used in equalization payments comes from Ontario but we don't benefit from the money. That makes us a have, not a have-not.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He also represents very passionately. The member from Oak Ridges–Markham thought perhaps that I was a bit outlandish or whatever. The member from Halton, I think, reflected most honestly about my comments, which was no surprise. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville should actually listen to one of his constituents, Johnny Bower. That's who he should start listening to. He's reading too many fairy tales, this guy here.

If I think of the Liberals, the best way to do it—Tim Hudak said to us, "When you put your head down at night after a long day here, remember what your constitu-

ents are saying to you.” That’s what Tim Hudak has said to this caucus: “Listen to the people that you represent and you can’t go wrong.” It appears to me that they’ve lost complete respect for their constituents.

I don’t like to generalize—there are probably good people over there—but here’s the deal: If you want to know the future, you should always look to the past. Past behaviour is a very good and very strong indicator of future behaviour.

When I look back to the days, as has been mentioned by the Mississauga–Streetsville member, of the deepest recession in Ontario in some time, I think back to Mitch Hepburn’s day. Who was his finance minister? Nixon. They left a great, huge hole in the ground, called a deficit, and started the assiduous growth of debt in Ontario. A few years went by with a stable hand on the tiller, led by prominent Conservative governments for 42 years, I think—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: George Drew.

Mr. John O’Toole: George Drew and others.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Les Frost.

Mr. John O’Toole: And Frost, and a whole line of them.

Now here is what’s happening: We came to a point in the 1990s when Bob Rae and David Peterson came in. Who was his finance minister? Another Nixon. The Liberal response to challenge is to spend—tax and spend. That’s the future. If that’s what people want, in October you will have the right to make a decision—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Needless to say, I’m very, very disappointed in the McGuinty government election budget. Instead of putting families first, making life more affordable, this budget puts corporate taxes first and leaves families paying more. It’s a blatantly partisan budget from a Liberal government desperate to defend the status quo that isn’t working.

Instead of taking the HST off hydro and home heating bills, this government continues to ignore its significant impact on household budgets. Instead of tax breaks for companies that create jobs right here in Ontario, the government is sticking with its strategy of no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways.

The budget has a vague plan to cut \$800 million from health care budgets. Hospitals are getting cut in real terms. So nothing to protect front-line care is there. But this same government will not—I repeat, will not—cap health care CEOs’ salaries and severances.

While life gets more expensive for families and other provinces create more jobs, the Liberals walk around wearing red blinders, insisting that their plan is working and expecting us all to fall in line with their line of thinking and to believe it. They want us to believe it. The Liberals’ “service review” is a lovely new smoke-and-mirrors term to cover the real agenda of privatization of many of the well-delivered public services we all depend on daily. Having learned nothing from the 407 privatization mess and their own North Bay P3 hospital over-

the-top cost overruns, the finance minister used the budget to attack the opposition. So I am assuming that, when the actual budget attacks the opposition, there’s not a heck of a lot in that budget. I think the saying is that the best defence is an offence. So you distract the people by going after the government that was there before.

Also, they say that tax cuts would threaten achieving deficit timeline targets. The finance minister must decide who really needs the money in their pockets—large, financially well-off corporations and their overpaid executives or struggling everyday Ontarians who desperately need every deduction from the excessive extra costs of living that have been imposed by this government.

To be clear about the partisan nature of this exercise, the budget attacks opposition parties for proposing relief for families from the hated HST, but doesn’t mention the cost to everyday Ontarians of their excessive and expensive corporate tax cuts. The government estimates are based on unbelievable claims about businesses passing along savings to consumers. Anyone who has filled up at the pump recently knows that’s simply not true.

All the while, the government is determined to take \$800 million out of health care, and hospital budgets aren’t keeping up with inflation. The Liberals are proposing 60,000 new post-secondary spaces but they don’t mention that Ontario has the highest tuition fees in Canada, and there’s nothing in the budget that addresses the cost of post-secondary education. When students leave college or university, a lot of them owe \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000. I think I bought my first house for about \$42,000, and I thought I’d never pay it off. They’re leaving school \$50,000 in debt. It’s like having a mortgage when you leave. So you’ve got to pay off your school debt before you start thinking about a house or car to stimulate the economy. It’s pretty scary for those young people to start out in life with a debt load like that.

The Liberals are proposing a deficit review committee—wow—that will report after the next election: “So we’ll let you worry about it and we’ll talk about it after.” Voters, you shouldn’t be writing them a blank cheque on this. You should bring them to task now before the election and during the election. Nor should they accept a review after the election. Ontarians have the right to all of the correct financial information before the election. And what I mean by that is that if you look at recent hydro costs—and they’re escalating. The government says, “We’re giving you a 10% rebate.” They didn’t tell you that in the next four years it’s going up 46%, and what they didn’t tell you after that is, on the Samsung deal, it could go up as high as 60%.

When we asked about the financial aspects of the Samsung deal, this government—I believe we’re part of the government; we’re not the governing body but we are part of this House and this government. We asked for information about the financial impact on Ontarians, and they said, “If you want information, you’ve got to file for freedom of information.” Can you imagine that? We’re part of the government and we had to pay to get freedom of information to find out what was in the deal, and then

when we did that, they sent us all a copy of the deal, and most of it was blacked out. All of the financial deal was blacked out, so we can't even tell our constituents what's going on. And I'll tell you why: because there's an election coming up. If those details came out before the election, it would bury them. They'd be embarrassed to show you what's in that deal and how much it's going to cost individual hydro payers in this province.

1630

They won't release it because they're afraid to, yet they yell every day—I sit and watch them yell, every day—at the opposition, “Where's your plan?” I say, “Show us yours and show us all of it. Don't show us part of it. We want to know your whole plan, too.” But when you black out documents, that's a little bit—I don't know—suspicious. It's a little bit secretive. It's a little bit spy-ish. I really have a problem with that. We are the sitting government. Whether we're in opposition or not, we have a right to information, and if they're going to withhold information, it really doesn't tell the taxpayers that they're accountable.

The Liberals are proposing a new risk management program for farmers, but farmers, farm families, have been waiting for real help for nearly a decade. We need to implement a program to ensure that we keep family farms and encourage their sustainability.

The Liberals are promising more breast cancer screening but they don't mention the clinics in London that were closed or how they forced breast cancer patients to fight for treatment, nor do they address the complete lack of breast cancer facilities for patients in the north.

On jobs, the Liberals tout their well-oiled statistics to say that their job plan is working, but this isn't working. That really bothers me, too: their well-oiled job creation program. Well, I don't know. That oil dried up in Hamilton, where I'm from, because since 2007 we've lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs, and they haven't come back. What has come back are \$11- to \$14-an-hour jobs. These jobs that were gone were \$20- to \$30-an-hour jobs. They say they want to boom the economy, that they want to stimulate the economy. You don't do it with \$11-an-hour jobs, because they're barely getting by and can barely pay their hydro bills. They're not going to buy a new car, a stove, a fridge, a big-screen TV. They're not going to do it because they can't afford it. As I've stated in this House more than once in the four years, 20% of the people in my riding are living below the poverty level—20%. That's huge. They won't be buying big cars and big houses and screens on the money they make, or don't make, because they're unemployed.

Ontario is lagging behind most provinces in recovering the jobs lost during the recession. They boasted 600,000 jobs. I've been hearing that for a couple of years too. Now it's down to 500,000, and dropping. Once again, a Liberal promise, Liberal statistics, and we're doing the old shuffle. We're going backwards. It's, “Oops, we over-thought...” And the 50,000 green venture jobs: I'd like to know where they are. I haven't seen any of those either.

The government's own estimates show that they are projecting 60,000 fewer jobs than previously expected, and their revised 2011 job creation numbers moved downward from 139,000 to 116,000, from 155,000 to 118,000 in 2012. I'm beginning to think that that trend will continue, and before we know it those 600,000 jobs will be less than 50,000 jobs they've created, so there will still be 550,000 people out of work.

Narrowly targeted tax credits for training, innovation and investments will create jobs. Do you really believe—I heard the member stand up and say, “You're getting a \$50 tax credit for extracurricular activities.” Give me a break. Fifty dollars a year? I can't even sharpen my skates 10 times for that, and that's for one person. Fifty bucks? If you break that down over a year, I'd be lucky if I could get a Tim Hortons coffee once a month. It's ridiculous. To be touting numbers like that is a joke.

The government has confirmed its corporate tax schedule. Between this year and next the government is wasting another \$400 million on corporate tax giveaways, the ongoing snub to everyday Ontarians who desperately need tax breaks. The government has confirmed its corporate tax schedule. Between this year and the next the government is wasting another \$400 million on corporate tax giveaways. You know what? They're giving hundreds of millions of dollars to these companies who are supposed to create jobs for Ontario, yet these companies take the money and go south. They stay for a year or so, make it look good, then they head south. It's happening all over Ontario. They invest it somewhere else. Our hard-earned tax money that's supposed to create jobs in Ontario and keep companies here so they will hire Ontarians isn't happening. They're heading south and taking our money with them.

What bank would lend money to people with no strings attached? You've got to have equity. You've got to have the ability to pay. You've got to have a job that pays well enough to pay the bank back. These guys throw it around like it's butter with no strings attached. “Here's \$400 million. Here's \$500 million.” And these companies head out.

Expenditure management: The budget states that expenses are lower than previously estimated, meant to demonstrate their ability to manage. Well, I'll tell you one thing: If I owned a company and, when I started as the manager of that company, I had a \$5-billion deficit, and four years later I had a \$20-billion deficit, chances are I'd be fired. Chances are I'd be kicked out. But in this government, even if I was kicked out, I'd be walking away with a nice severance, a big buyout. And some of these severances of the CEOs exceed their yearly wage—unbelievable.

The Liberals claim to have identified \$1.5 billion over three years in expense reductions. Well, that's interesting. I remember the health scandal. I asked them on one committee, “You spent \$385 million creating a health card: administration costs, software, hardware,” and I asked for the numbers on that. “What was it spent on? What did we get for our money?” They wouldn't tell me.

The government wouldn't tell, again. They talk about accountability. So we had to go through freedom of information; we went through it again.

When it came back to me, I asked, "What did we get for that \$388 million?"

They said, "Well, you got \$100 million worth of programs, hardware, software etc."

I said, "Where did the other \$288 million go?"
"Consultants."

Sixty-six per cent of that budget went to consultants in four or five years—and buyouts and switching consultants and all the things they do.

That's one ministry. There are 22 large ministries. If they wasted over \$200 million on that, I don't even want to begin to think what they wasted at the other 21 ministries. And I let the people of Ontario know that this government is indirectly or directly involved with another 200-and-something agencies, tribunals, boards and school boards—you name it. There's even more, but they're not going to have them do an audit. I think I'd be safe to say there's billions wasted around here a year.

What could Paul Miller do with \$1 billion in Hamilton? I could feed all those people, the 20% that don't have decent meals. I could probably put a lot of people back to work. I could do a lot in Hamilton with \$1 billion—not happening. They'd rather give it to friendly consultants. And that's one ministry. That's scary.

They're cutting the OPS by 1,500 positions between April 2012 and May 2014, in addition to the jobs lost through the move to the HST. They say they'll be asking ministries to look at attrition etc. to accomplish their target.

They're going to review the ServiceOntario model, including examining public-private partnerships.

Reducing the funding envelope for executive offices of hospitals and universities etc: That could mean executive salaries, but it's up to the organizations. What does that mean, "It's up to the organizations"? How can they claim they're going to reduce it when they leave it up to the organizations to make the decision? Do you think anybody is going to make a decision to take money out of their own pocket? I don't think so.

They're closing older, underutilized jails in Owen Sound, Walkerton and Toronto. They are cancelling the construction of the Toronto west courthouse, in Etobicoke, which was announced in 2009, to save \$180 million.

They're naming Don Drummond to lead the new commission on the reform of Ontario public services. Expect a report back from the government agencies on the progress on the wage freeze in early May. All our available indications are that the wage freeze didn't work. It didn't work. But it's hard to take those promises seriously when in executive offices, the McGuinty Liberals are letting hospital CEO salaries and severances skyrocket well into the six figures.

Cancelling the Toronto courthouse: Is this a well-thought-out, reasonable or good idea given the fact that Ontario's court backlog poses a real threat to our justice

system? Obviously, if the time runs out when someone is supposed to go for a hearing or go to court for their sentencing, and they've run out of time and then they release them, put them back on the street, it's like a slap on the hand: "Go get 'em, fellas. You can do it again."

1640

ServiceOntario privatization: How can they trick themselves, let alone the public, into believing that the privatization of public services is going to save money? I don't think so. History shows us that it costs people more. I don't know any company that's in it for their shareholders that is not going to try to make money on the backs of the people of Ontario. They're going to try to make money, and it isn't cheaper; trust me.

I'm also concerned about the privacy implications of handing sensitive information to the for-profit sector, especially those with corporate ties to the US, where our privacy laws mean absolutely nothing. Our laws mean nothing to these people. Look at US Steel in Hamilton. They have snubbed their nose at the federal and provincial governments. They do what they want. They don't listen to our labour laws. They don't listen to our corporate laws. They don't listen to our contractual laws. They just say, "We don't care. Take us to court for five years and fine us. Good luck."

I saw the economic development minister stand up here and brag about the \$45 million they gave to Mittal, formerly Dofasco, in Hamilton—nothing for the closed US Steel place where all the guys are locked out, but for a company that is very wealthy and owned by one of the richest men in the world. Do you know that the \$45 million that Minister Papatello was bragging about, that she gave to them for one department in Dofasco that they said was going to create jobs—all Dofasco is doing is moving employees that they might have had to lay off over to fill those positions? That's what's going to happen. There will be no job creation. The \$45 million? Do you know that this guy spent more on his daughter's wedding? So I don't really think he needed it. There's another foreign corporation taking good Ontario tax dollars, and that's like chump change to this guy.

The Don Drummond panel makes me suspicious when a process starts right before an election. Isn't that interesting: a panel starting right before an election that will report back in 2012. Why don't you report back before October? Why are we waiting until 2012? Nice time to name: Make it look you're doing something, how you're going to fix it, and then wait until after the election.

Since the 2009 budget, we've been calling for a deficit reduction that puts families first. Instead, the government's handing out billions in corporate tax cuts and letting hospital CEO salaries skyrocket. The Ontario fiscal framework, as seen by this Liberal government, shows deficit projections in 2011-12 of \$16.7 billion, in 2012-13 of \$15.2 billion and in 2013-14 of \$13.3 billion. This is the very government that, when I first came here four years ago, stood up and chastised the official opposition for leaving them with a \$5-billion debt. Well, we're at \$20 billion and climbing. Don't throw rocks when you

live in a glass house. They suggest that the budget will be balanced in 2017-18, at which time an additional \$50 billion in debt will be rolled up.

Since the 2010 budget, we've been calling for a deficit reduction that puts families first. Instead, this government is handing out billions in corporate tax cuts and letting hospital CEOs run away with our tax dollars, all at the expense of hard-working, job-seeking Ontarians.

The Liberal promises go on and on. If I remember, I think to date they've broken about 112 election promises in the last seven years. So I'm telling the people of Ontario: Take a good, hard look at this government, because they certainly aren't doing you justice.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Hamilton East. This is known as question and answer period, so I'm just going to ask him a few questions on some omissions—actually, it's called comments and questions. Instead of commenting on the remarks that he made, I just want to ask a few quick questions, and maybe he can answer them in his reply.

Where is the NDP plan? We've asked for the NDP plan and we don't have one yet. Would the NDP have opened up collective agreements like they did before? Would the NDP do what others suggested, and when GM and Chrysler were in trouble, would they have not given them money and closed them down? We gave them money and they stayed in operation, and that money was in the form of loans.

Would the NDP cut and slash and burn other programs—health care and education, for example—which would destroy one of Ontario's proudest traditions? We made a decision to fix, protect and continue with health care and education.

We created an environment to attract new employment and to have it invest here. We focused on health care and education, because if you've got good health care and good education, companies will come here, and they are coming here. I don't have enough time to list them all. It's not just Samsung; there are many others that have come here.

We did not sell assets. Would the NDP have sold assets, like the 407? I'd like to know that answer.

We have made a decision—and this decision was made not just last year or the year before; it was made way back in 2003—to strengthen health care and to strengthen education. We stayed the course, and we did it—and this was not mentioned at all—during the biggest recession since the 1930s. We overcame it and focused on building our province.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, as I said before, speaks passionately and, I believe, is quite well informed on the constituents he represents.

I think it's important, because he was standing up for working families, that he be aware of this: If you check

on page 226 of the budget for 2011-12—that's the fiscal year we're talking about—for 2010-11 it's \$106 billion and it's going up to \$108 billion, and that's on the revenue side. If you look at it, the largest increase in revenue is in personal income tax; it's going from \$23 billion to \$25 billion. There's the \$2 billion more: It's coming from taxes, from your pocket. There it is; I'm reading it from the document.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek should pay very close attention to the fact that the spending is a function of taxation. If the taxation doesn't come up as forecast, then you have a larger deficit. I put to you, and the member from Hamilton East should probably look into this in his response: I believe that the deficit will be larger next year, not smaller.

How many times can the people of Ontario take this? I think it's worthy of reflection. It is time for change; there's no question about it. Have some respect for the families, not just in Hamilton but in Durham. In fact, our leader, Tim Hudak, almost every day says, "Have some respect for the families of Ontario." They have hit the wall, and this government seems to not care. I don't like to accuse them of being heartless, but often the truth is in the observations. If it appears to you they are, then perhaps, in your case, they are insensitive.

Somehow, the Premier has lost his way. I have lost faith myself, and I believe—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was listening to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and his rather interesting comments. He did mention that the speech certainly did not mention poverty. It was one of the promises in the 2007 election, that we were going to have a poverty reduction strategy, that we were going to be serious about it, and here we are, with a new speech that doesn't even mention it.

He did talk about it, because in his riding, like in many other ridings in Ontario—he mentioned that 20% of the population in his riding lives in poverty. I would tell you that the numbers are similar if you go throughout many of the ridings in Ontario. Poverty has a gender: It is mainly women and children who live in poverty. Children were supposed to be the targets of the poverty reduction strategy, but it has fallen completely off the radar, to the point where we don't hear about it at all.

He talked about the need to improve pensions, either the pensions of people who are lucky enough to have one, or for the 75% or so of Ontarians who don't have a pension at all. Why didn't we start to take steps forward so that as the baby boomers go and as the new generation prepares for retirement, we start to see a plan?

This budget certainly was not visionary. It has not given us a pathway as to where we would like to take Ontario into the future. It was very limited and long on rhetoric.

1650

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to stand up again to speak to this bill, our budget bill. I thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Scarborough Southwest, Durham and Nickel Belt for their comments.

Obviously when we get into a budget debate, there are different opinions around the room. I think ultimately we all want to get to the same place; it's just a question of how we get there. We've all gone through a worldwide recession. Decisions were made to keep people working. We partnered with the federal government, as all the other provinces did in this country. The fact of investing money into our economy was a decision that was made to keep people working. We decided to do that because the more people that are working, the more people that are paying into the system rather than drawing out of the system.

I'm very happy with the supports that have been put in place in this budget. The risk management program is going to be huge in rural Ontario. We have had comments made where people are referring to it as the biggest step forward in over 50 years.

Support for children's mental health: In rural Ontario this is huge, because of the partnerships that will exist between the Ministries of Health, Children and Youth Services and Education for delivering models looking at that. This ties into the early identification that we're going to see through the full-day learning programs which are going to be in place. It's a great step forward. I'm thrilled that that was there.

We look at different ways that people are dealing with budgets around the world. There was a lot of speculation about what this government would do. It's very clear in the budget document what we're planning to do. There are no tax increases in there. In Nova Scotia earlier this year the NDP government raised their HST by two percentage points while reducing it on some articles. In England we've seen a good example of what happens with the Conservatives, where they've raised the value-added tax a great deal to cover their expenses.

I appreciate the chance to comment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to respond to the member from Scarborough Southwest. He said, "What's the NDP plan?" Well, the NDP plan was, first of all, to cut the HST off heating oil and hydro. In the last four years—I don't know if the member's noticed—we've had bills on the floor to stimulate the economy; for example, a 10% manufacturing credit for business. We had a bill for Buy Ontario shot down by the Liberals. The other bill shot down by the Liberals: 50% Canadian content of railway cars, whatever is manufactured in Ontario, where 50% of the work is done here; not just a warehouse to distribute it but the work's actually done here.

Then he talks about, what are our problems with the financial aspect of it? Well, there's your Samsung deal. He mentioned the Samsung deal. There's a deal that's going to escalate hydro. We asked for the information on

that so we could do a good dialogue on the content of that deal with Samsung. We had to go through freedom of information to get it, and when we got it, most of it was blacked out. In fact, all the financial details were blacked out. So if this government is so proud of their record, why did they black out the entire deal so we can't read it and analyze it? It tells me it's not such a good deal. Estimates say that your hydro will go up 60%, and they gave you a 10% rebate. It doesn't quite cut it; you're still down 50% in about six years. You're going to pay 50% more for your hydro.

They talk about the HST. I've heard several members across there talk about Nova Scotia and HST. Well, really, there isn't a lot of industry in Nova Scotia. They had fishing. They had forestry. They had some things. They don't have the industrial base Ontario has. They don't have the population we have. They're nowhere near us. Naturally, they've got to get the taxes from somewhere, so they were forced to raise the HST because they have no income to run their government. They don't have 13 million people, the last time I counted, in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. They keep comparing that. It's ridiculous—

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have 10 minutes today to speak on this budget motion. I'll mention at the beginning that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Peterborough.

One of the things that I've heard being chronically and systematically criticized in this House by the NDP over the course of the last two or three years has been our commitment to lower business taxes in the province of Ontario. This budget maintained that commitment. The corporate tax reductions, of course, are now getting some play, some louder noise than the other business tax reductions. It's important to note that over the course of the last two to three years, we have systemically, on a regular basis, been lowering the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario to lead to investment and job creation: HST, lower business education tax rates, lowering the small business tax threshold, the elimination of capital tax, and the reduction in corporate tax rates. So there is a whole program in place—not just corporate tax rates—that we have embarked upon to ensure that as we come through the greatest recession since the Great Depression, Ontario will be viewed as a jurisdiction that business investment will view favourably.

It's not lost on anybody in this Legislature, I am sure, that when jobs are lost through no fault of anyone's, business investment then begins to look to where it is that they will reinvest to create employment and investment in given jurisdictions.

I want to focus a little bit on the corporate tax reductions, though, because that's the part that gets criticized on a regular basis primarily by the NDP.

In northern Ontario, there is a development right now that is commonly being referred to as the Ring of Fire. That find in northern Ontario is a chromite deposit that is

said to be the richest on the planet. I'm hesitant to quote a number, but I'm told that that deposit has an 80- to 100-year mine life. It is that incredibly rich. The mine is going to occur where it will occur, and then the smelting operations—the company, Cliffs resources, is currently spending some time determining where it is that smelting processing operation is going to occur. There's a lot of discussion, a lot of jockeying amongst different communities in Ontario and, I am sure, amongst other provinces, in terms of lobbying and sitting down with Cliffs to try to entice them to process that ore body within their jurisdiction. The job creation that will flow from the processing component of that mining operation is going to be enormous: Some are saying as many as 500 or more jobs once the plant is constructed. The original cost of the construction of the plant—I'm not sure how many construction jobs would be associated with that, but it would be significant.

My point is this: While the NDP, on a consistent basis, want to criticize corporate tax reductions, I think it might be worth their time if they would pick up the phone and ask Cliffs resources what it is they consider when they choose a jurisdiction in which they will place their processing facility for the chromite deposit that is called the Ring of Fire.

As you know, it's primarily the NDP and, unfortunately, even a bit more lately, the Conservatives who want to harp on electricity pricing as having been responsible for the loss of jobs in the forestry industry. I've spoken at length in here and I've said what a ridiculous argument it is that the NDP have put forward. I look forward to spending more time on that in the coming months and especially in the election, to just blow that argument out of the water, and I've spent some of the time doing that here. Electricity pricing is something that they will consider, but so are labour costs and so are tax costs.

If you're serious about seeing job creation occur in the province of Ontario, you have to understand that while sometimes we all have difficult times with large corporations—I've spent some time in meetings with them where there are things you probably prefer to say that you can't. But at the end of the day, the NDP seems unwilling to acknowledge that they still are the people, in many instances, who provide a lot of employment. While all of us, from time to time, don't particularly enjoy our meetings with large corporations, they are large employers and we all want them to locate in the province of Ontario so that they can provide investment and jobs.

While the NDP, it seems, are opposed ideologically to any kind of business tax cut, I would expect them to understand that Cliffs resources, who are considering locating a major processing facility in Ontario, will be very interested in what the corporate tax rates in Ontario are and how those corporate tax rates compare to other provinces, especially Manitoba and Quebec, our neighbouring provinces. I would think they might spend a little time considering that.

1700

Contained within the budget was one more exhibition of our government's commitment to northern Ontario,

and that is, of course, the \$10-million increment that was included for the northern Ontario heritage fund program. This program gets referenced a lot in this Legislature, and I think, quite frankly, it gets taken for granted. The job creation and retention that has occurred in northern Ontario in the last seven years under this program is somewhere in the order of 15,000 jobs. When we formed government in 2003, that program had morphed into a public sector infrastructure program, and I was pleased that the minister of the day, Rick Bartolucci, asked me to undertake a study to review that program. We brought back a report that was adopted, and the program shifted back to its original mandate, which was away from public infrastructure—we retained one public infrastructure program—back to supporting and creating private sector jobs. That program is doing it, as I just mentioned, to the tune of about 15,000 retained or created jobs over the last six years or so.

Why is that \$10 million important? In 2007, we committed to increasing the fund, which was annually at \$60 million a year, by \$10 million per year every year for four consecutive years. This is the fourth year of that commitment. So we went from \$60 million to \$70 million, from \$70 million to \$80 million, from \$80 million to \$90 million, and now \$90 million to \$100 million—this year, \$40 million more than four years ago, last year \$30 million more than three years ago, the year before that \$20 million more. Now we will have spent \$100 million more in the last four years out of the northern Ontario heritage fund than was previously the case. That's on top of the \$60 million a year. Four years times \$60 million would have been \$240 million in northern Ontario. Our increases in commitment have meant that \$240 million is actually \$340 million. If people are looking for a commitment to northern Ontario, I would say that one example is clear and concise in terms of our government's commitment to northern Ontario.

I'll even make the point a bit more concise and compare our approach to the northern Ontario heritage fund, as we came out of the greatest recession since the Great Depression, to the approach that was taken by the NDP when they went through a milder recession in the early 1990s. What did they do with the northern Ontario heritage fund? Sixty million dollars, around 1993 or 1994, a fund only there to support northern Ontario—the NDP took all \$60 million of it out, 100%, and put it into general revenue. Our approach, as a Liberal government, with a much deeper recession and the pressure on budgets significant and severe, is slightly different. It would have been easy to roll over that program and bring it back into general revenue. Not only didn't we do that, like the NDP did in the early 1990s; we increased it. So we didn't take it out; we increased it from \$60 million to \$70 million, from \$70 million to \$80 million, from \$80 million to \$90 million, and now up to \$100 million, as I've said.

This was not a budget that sprinkled little bits of money and programs and new spending around the province. Some of the press releases that went out after the budget tried to say there was nothing for northern On-

tario. There really was nothing in this budget that spoke to specific geographic regions of the province, but this \$10-million commitment, the fourth of a four-year commitment of an extra \$10 million per year up to \$100 million, clearly spoke to that. I think it's extremely important that I highlight that.

My time is almost up. I only have 10 minutes today. I want to quickly acknowledge our commitment on the breast screening program and the expansion of that program. As people have heard in the Legislature, contained within this budget document is \$15 million of funding over three years that will provide upwards of 90,000 more exams, lowering the age of eligibility for a breast screening exam from 50 down to 30 years old for those people at risk. So it's a very significant enhancement.

There's a run in Thunder Bay, the CIBC Run for the Cure, that I participate in every year. I know those people will be extremely gratified and happy to hear about this as well.

My time is up. I wish I had more time, but I yield the floor to my colleague from Peterborough.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's really a pleasure for me to enter the discussion this afternoon about the budget. I want to start by quoting from two documents. One is from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; it's dated February 1, 2011. It was presented by Ian Howcroft and Paul Clipsham. They made a presentation to the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. They say it well. I just want to quote from their report. They said:

"We continue to emerge from a deep and protracted recession. Manufacturers and exporters have been impacted significantly. But there are signs of greater optimism for the sector going forward. In fact, CME's forecast for the coming year is that manufacturing investment and exports will outpace GDP growth in 2011. In fact, Canada will rely on exports and business investment to sustain economic recovery. Export volumes are expected to expand 10% and machinery and equipment investments will increase by 16.5%. Ontario"—and I quote—"is once again leading the economic charge based primarily on the resiliency of our industrial and manufacturing base. Companies are adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. They are taking the necessary steps to survive and thrive in the new global reality.

"Credit for the recovery is also owing to the Ontario government taking bold steps to address the challenges that are impacting manufacturers and exporters. In particular, CME strongly supports the HST, corporate tax rate reductions, the Smart program, significant infrastructure investments and measures to encourage skills training and development."

To quote now from a group that you would think would be directly opposite to this, I want to quote from the CAW Canada Ontario pre-budget submission of February 1, 2011, made by a very distinguished labour leader in Canada, Ken Lewenza, who is their national president.

"We offer our comments and suggestions in a constructive, non-partisan spirit. We recognize the difficult and competing pressures which the current Ontario government is attempting to balance, and while we do not endorse every decision this government has made, we do wish to commend the positive initiatives that have been taken in numerous areas...." I'll quote just a couple: "extensive support for the automotive industry and manufacturing in general" and "positive environmental initiatives (including the Green Energy Act and its made-in-Ontario manufacturing strategy)."

They go on, on page 3: "The Ontario government's participation in the 2009 joint US-Canada-Ontario rescue of GM and Chrysler has already proven to be one of the most effective investments of taxpayer dollars in" Ontario "history. The companies were saved from liquidation—which would have cost Ontario's economy an estimated \$40-60 billion in GDP (and cost the provincial government, not incidentally, \$4 billion in annual fiscal damage). The joint government actions preserved in excess of 20,000 direct" high-paying "jobs (and resulting tax revenues), and tens of thousands of indirect spin-off jobs. The federal government estimates the rescue" alone, across Canada, "saved 51,000 jobs in total."

I think it's important that we get those comments on the record, both from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association and the CAW.

In particular, in my riding of Peterborough, General Motors represents about 25% of the local economy. That's made up of retired GM employees. Through our rescue package, we saved their hard-earned pensions. It covers the active employees at General Motors in my riding, and it has also protected a number of the businesses that are part of the GM-in-Oshawa supply chain.

I know there were members opposite, of course, who didn't support that rescue, and perhaps this fall they'll answer questions to their constituents about why they were prepared to jeopardize \$60 billion in Ontario GDP by not supporting that rescue package.

I'd also like to quote one of the things that's very important to my riding, on page 128. It is the commitment of the Ontario government to extend the 407 east from Brock Road in Pickering to Highway 35/115. I was absolutely shocked that we wouldn't have gotten more support on this announcement from the member from Durham and the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

1710

This certainly contrasts—if you'll just bear with me for a moment—a statement that was made by the five federal members of Parliament in the area. Give me a moment here, and I'll find it. It was a memorandum that was signed by five federal members that are impacted by the 407: the Honourable Jim Flaherty, member of Parliament from Whitby-Oshawa; the honourable Colin Carrie, member of Parliament for Oshawa; the honourable Barry Devolin, the member of Parliament for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; the famous Bev Oda, the member of Parliament for Durham; and last, but not least, the honourable Dean Del Mastro, member of Parliament for

Peterborough. I want to quote the joint communiqué that they issued on March 11, 2011.

“Statement on the 407 Announcement.

“The members of Parliament impacted by the extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115 acknowledged the provincial government’s announcement today. While not perfect, this is a positive development and victory”—I repeat, “and victory”—“for our communities.”

They go on to say in this communiqué, and I certainly support what they have here, “We now have agreement that the work will proceed as a continuous build over the next several years. We will see the completion of the extension to Harmony Road by 2015, followed by the completion of the Durham link between Highways 401 and the 407 and the connection to Taunton Road by 2017, and finished by the eastward extension to Highway 35/115 by 2020.”

As I’ve said, that’s been endorsed by several very distinguished members of the federal Parliament, including federal Finance Minister Flaherty, Colin Carrie, Barry Devolin, Bev Oda and Dean Del Mastro. I really want to thank them for their endorsement of our provincial announcement. That’s good news for everybody involved.

In the budget last Tuesday, something that is widely supported is the risk management model that’s been developed now for the cattle, pork, sheep, grains and oil seeds, and fruit and vegetables. There was this big statement that someone else was taking credit for this, and it got quite a chuckle from the farm community in my riding. In fact, let’s get on the record who developed this model.

Exactly two years ago, a group of cattle farmers came together in my riding and I’ll name them today: Mr. Edgar Cornish, Mr. Sam Wood, Mr. Jack Holland, Mr. John Lunn, Mr. Wayne Telford and Mr. Allan Kidd. They developed the risk management model for the cattle industry in the province of Ontario. Those gentlemen travelled to every respective cattlemen’s association across Ontario so they could explain the model that they developed and, indeed, garner their support to make that a reality, which was reflected in last Tuesday’s budget.

You know, it’s interesting. They were joking to me, “Well, we heard about the member from Oxford.” I said, “Yeah, we remember the member from Oxford.” When he was the ag minister, he closed the agricultural office in the riding of Peterborough, and he was better known for the famous scandal that occurred at Agricorp during his period of time.

When you look through this budget, I was pleased that Tony Tilly, the president of Fleming College, was in the audience last Tuesday. He’s very supportive of the 60,000 additional spaces that will be created through this budget that’s laid out in this plan. Bonnie Patterson, the former president of Trent University, who’s now a head of the umbrella organization for universities of the province of Ontario—very distinguished individual in the university field—also acknowledges the work that’s being done through these 60,000 additional spaces that will be very helpful.

We continue, through the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to support family health teams. In 2004, there were 27,000 people in Peterborough riding without access to primary care. This past spring, I’m pleased to report there’s 1,500 people left: 27,000 down to 1,500 left that don’t have access to primary care. In fact, the Peterborough health team models, five of them, which are supported by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, were the topic of a CTV story back on Sunday, April 3—just in the last few days.

A very extensive report has been prepared by a number of doctors in Peterborough: Walter Rosser, Jack Colwill, Jan Kasperski and Dr. Lynn Wilson, who put together Progress of Ontario’s Family Health Team Model: A Patient-Centred Medical Home. They go on to talk about the success of family health teams in the province of Ontario. They note in this document that it was an initiative of this government that started family health teams to be implemented right across—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan spoke about the importance of funds being allocated in the budget for advanced and improved breast screening processes, and certainly we agree with that. We supported the private member’s bill that was brought forward by the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I think that’s something that all parties in this Legislature agreed to. That, in itself, is a good thing.

The problem is that there are very mixed signals coming from this government with respect to that whole issue. One is the fact that there has recently been notice about the closing of a really valuable breast screening program in London, Ontario. Maybe some of the new funds can be used to save that clinic because I understand it was considered to be very important in London.

Secondly, we have the problem of what you do with the screening results once you have them. We saw that most recently in this Legislature where a young woman who did all of the right things and had herself screened was found to have a breast tumour and wasn’t able to get the medication she needed. She didn’t have access to Herceptin, and it was really only after there was a huge public outcry that the government finally backed down. Thankfully, they are going to be providing this much-needed medication to Ms. Anzarut.

With respect to those comments, I think we still have to remember that there are still many issues that are outstanding surrounding that.

With respect to the comments made by the member from Peterborough on the Highway 407 east extension, sure, the federal members did say that it was basically better than nothing, which is pretty much what we had before. We had a broken promise to complete the extension by 2013, and we had no end date in sight. So certainly, a promise now to complete it by 2020 is good, but it’s not better—before we had an end date of 2013. We have something now seven years later. Is that great? No, it’s not wonderful, but it’s better than what we had. I

guess that's the most we can say about it, but we'll continue to advocate for faster completion. It's important for all of Durham region and Peterborough too.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to listen to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan when we talked about Cliffs resources. He kept saying, “The NDP is saying this about energy prices,” and “The NDP is saying that.”

All we're saying is, go to Cliffs resources' website, click on page 2, and you will see, in full colour, the base case. I'm happy to report the base case is in my riding, in Capreol; I'm really happy, and this is the base case. But it also says there, in full colour with a bar chart, that at present electricity prices, no jurisdiction in Ontario is feasible.

I'm not saying that; I'm not saying anything. I'm telling the member to go see what Cliffs resources is saying. Cliffs resources is saying that with the electricity prices in Ontario, it doesn't matter where the base case is located, it doesn't matter which one of the mayors fight with one another to have their processing plant in their riding or in their town or township; no geographical location within Ontario will be considered at the present electricity price. I encourage everybody to go to cliffresources.com and click on page 2, full colour for everybody to see. It's not the NDP that's saying that the electricity is too expensive for Cliffs resources to settle in Ontario; it is Cliffs resources that is saying it. So I invite everybody to go check what the member had to say.

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and to speak on budget 2011. When you look at this budget, which was presented to the House by the Minister of Finance last Tuesday, you see that this budget is a prudent budget, it's a well-balanced budget, and it also reflects the values of the Ontario Liberal Party and also it reflects the vision of this Premier, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Again, as I said, it's a prudent budget. In this budget, the government is investing in essential services, in education, in health care, in infrastructure, in social services. In the meantime, the budget predicts that our deficit will be down by \$3 billion.

1720

In the area of education, major investment is going to occur, according to this budget: 60,000 new spots are going to be created in our universities and colleges. The attainment rate of our students in universities and colleges was 56% in 2003 and now is 64%; it's going to rise to 70%. We all know that education is important to the success of our young people and, accordingly, to the success of our economy in the long term.

Also in this budget, we are introducing full-day kindergarten. Kids four years and five years old can go to kindergarten, or to school, basically, and they'll learn, and their parents don't need to pay a single cent.

According to this budget, kindergarten education has become a part of public education like elementary education and secondary education. Now we've added another category of education to elementary and public education. This follows the philosophy that education really starts at the time when a child is born, not at the age of six or seven. We have reduced that age to four.

On the side of—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think that one of the things that this budget really hits the right note on is its tax plan for jobs and growth, and some of the tax relief that it gives the families in areas like Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville and all across the 905 belt. For example, personal cuts to taxation mean that for about 93% of Ontarians, on average, their taxes are going to be reduced by about \$200. That's the equivalent of something like all of the HST on something like \$2,600 worth of purchases.

Another measure is the complete elimination of Ontario income tax for about 90,000 low-income taxpayers, and a lot of these are seniors, people on fixed incomes. So even though—and I'll say to them especially now; we're in the beginning of April—you don't have to pay personal income taxes, it's really important that you actually file a tax return because many of the benefits that come to you come from having filed a tax return. So even if you have no income, even if you haven't filed for years, go to one of the free tax clinics. There will be any number of people willing to help you in the early part of April; it's a little harder to get an accountant in the latter part of April. If you file a tax return, you're eligible for a lot of tax credits, which could be money right back in your bank account working for you.

Another measure is sales tax relief for about 3.1 million households through the Ontario sales tax credit. For example, at \$260 a person, that's \$1,040 for a family of four—that's all of the HST on something like \$13,000 worth of purchases not previously subject to tax. That makes a difference. That makes us a more prosperous province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Richmond Hill and Mississauga–Streetsville.

First, to the member from Nickel Belt: She talked about electricity pricing. I had talked about electricity pricing in the context of it being one input cost for large corporations operating in the province of Ontario. I used it as an analogy and put it beside corporate income tax reductions that any large corporation would consider when they were going to locate or not locate a business in the province of Ontario. Perhaps I didn't make my point clear enough, but unfortunately, the member from Nickel Belt chose not to address her party's opposition, the NDP opposition, to corporate tax reductions in the province of Ontario. That was the point. Electricity is one input cost,

corporate taxation is another input cost. Obviously, any company that is going to locate and make significant investment in a provincial jurisdiction—Ontario—is going to consider corporate taxation rates. Perhaps next time—she’s here by herself today—somebody from the NDP will address their opposition to corporate taxation.

To the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who spoke as well, I thank her for her comments, but I think they may have conveyed a bit of an impression to people who are following the debate that there are reductions coming when it comes to health care in the province of Ontario. What I know is that since I’ve been here in 2003, the province of Ontario has spent \$30 billion, give or take, on health care. Today, in 2011, seven-plus years and counting, that number stands at about \$46 billion.

If you want to phrase that or frame that as a reduction, that’s fine: 10,000 more nurses, 2,900 more doctors—the list goes on and on. I know that many of us have great examples in our own ridings that we can speak to that represent investments in health care. So I just thought I needed to address that comment as well.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m pleased to rise to speak on the budget. I’d like to begin my comments with an editorial that actually appeared the day before the budget. I think it puts the budget and any further discussions we have about Ontario’s economy in perspective. It’s “Ontario: Land of Red Ink.

“From economic engine of Confederation to fiscal basket case, Ontario has come a long way under the tenure of Premier Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government. It now is saddled with a \$17,000 per-capita debt, and is spending 10 cents on the budget dollar on interest payments.”

We cannot lose track of the fact that we collectively, the Liberal government, have doubled the debt left for future Ontario residents and taxpayers. It amazes me that we don’t begin every discussion talking about how much debt and how much future liability we are leaving for our children, our grandchildren and, quite frankly, our great-grandchildren.

Putting that in perspective, I will begin my discussions, as I did in comments earlier today, on one positive item in the budget. It was unfortunately only two lines, but they are, “We are introducing a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.

“At the outset, our focus will be on children and youth.”

I’m very happy that that’s in there. As I raised earlier today, I would love to have more details on which ministries it’s going to flow through and which services are going to be provided or added to the mix, because it doesn’t take any of us very long to figure out that mental health and addiction services across Ontario are inconsistent. There are wait-lists that are an embarrassment to any of us who have tried to help constituents. We really need some action on that, so I would love to have anyone who can shed some light on what exactly is going to be

coming forward with the mental health and addictions strategy to enlighten all of us. There is no mention of it in the first bill, Bill 173, which is An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, but as I say, I’m anxious to see what is coming forward on that side.

I think we need to touch a bit on the magic \$3 billion that suddenly was saved in less than 12 months. Where did that actually come from? How do we have that kind of differentiation of almost \$3 billion? I see that we’ve been able to nail down a bit of some of the details. There’s the \$700-million planned reserve, which is in every budget annually. As long as we don’t have unforeseen circumstances, that, of course, all gets rolled back in. So there’s the first magic billion.

Significantly lower interest charges as a result of lower-than-anticipated interest rates and borrowing requirements: I’m not sure how it could be unanticipated. We have had unusual historic lows in interest—thank goodness, quite frankly, because we’re already using 10 cents of every dollar on interest payments. I can only imagine what that’s going to do to our program spending when interest rates start to increase—and there isn’t an economist who doesn’t believe that they are going to start creeping up.

1730

Then there’s the \$2.6 billion in program expense savings, accomplished mainly through cost avoidance, unused contingency funds, lower demand for automatic stabilizers like job retraining, extended stimulus funding, and delayed infrastructure investments. Of course, we all understand the delayed infrastructure spending: It’s going to happen. The money is going to flow. There were delays in some of those third, third and third projects that ultimately didn’t get included in last year’s budget. Therefore they’re being rolled over; hardly a savings that I would issue a press release about.

The economic growth figures: I think we’ve had some comments about how they have been magically and significantly revised downward, which will again ultimately affect revenue projections and what program spending is going to be available. Of course, as I talked about earlier, debt interest is going up, so the debt interest projections have been revised upward. Not a good mix: You have less money coming in and you’re spending more in interest charges. It’s a terrible combination if you’re actually trying to provide services and ensure that our important health, education and social services that Ontario governments are expected to provide are going to be there when we need them.

I like the comment about where they’re going to find some of the savings moving forward. The nice one for me is that agencies have been asked to find \$200 million in efficiencies by 2013-14. There’s no explanation as to what direction or what instructions the agencies have been given in order to find those savings, and of course nothing that spells out exactly how or what the expectation is for individual agencies, some being considerably larger than others. How are you spreading that \$200

million across the 600 and some odd agencies, boards and commissions that currently operate under the province of Ontario?

Cut funding for executives at transfer partners—the examples given were hospitals, universities, school boards and government agencies—by 10% over two years. Certainly nothing in the first budget bill—some proposed legislation. How are those 10% savings happening? Again, what is the directive? What is the decision point that you have shared, either in memo form or in legislation or regulation, that is going to force, encourage the 10% funding cut for executives? I, quite frankly, don't know how you would do that because, of course, they all have individual boards of directors that make those decisions. The individual ministries aren't setting executive salaries. Until you start making some very specific and clear instruction to your board members, I don't see how you can accomplish that goal.

Close underutilized jails: That is an interesting one because my caucus colleague from Sarnia heard about it in the budget, as did his community. If you speak to residents in Sarnia, they will tell you that in fact the jail is not underutilized, has been very, very active, very full. I'm wondering where the underutilization comes from unless they're going to do a wholesale release.

Then we move to the full implementation of all-day kindergarten. It's been moved up to 2014 and yet no capital dollars allocated. Now, we all understand that the schools that were chosen by the Minister of Education were chosen based on the fact that they had room. It was going to cost small amounts of money to actually implement those first ones. They were the—what do we like to say?—the low-hanging fruit; they were the easy ones. “There is space in the schools, empty classrooms, so we will decide that those are the schools that we're going to begin with.” The easy ones are done.

The Peel public board, which is one of the boards that I represent, has actually said they are not going to implement any additional schools for full-day learning because they don't have the money for it. They're looking at their capital dollars, they're looking at the fact that there is no money flowing through the Ministry of Education, and they're saying, “We're not going to implement this program unless you're prepared to fund it.” That, of course, has not happened, and it certainly wasn't laid out in the budget.

The additional parts that I wanted to talk about were consolidating shared services and creating agency clusters.

Consolidation: We've seen a little bit of that with children's aid societies. Of course, children's aid societies generally have been trying, over the last number of years, to implement the many additional roles and responsibilities that the government has been giving them through legislation—again, without any funding dollars attached to them. At this point, those savings are supposed to amount to \$9 million. As my father said, I'll believe it when I see it.

I want to jump down to another interesting thing that fascinated me as we were going through this budget.

There was a line that talked about increasing hospital base funding by 1.5%. This becomes a real issue for me because, as you know, I live in a growth community, in Dufferin–Caledon. Peel has been dealing with some very high population increases, not just in the last five years, but over the last 20 years. When we do increases to base funding, what we essentially do is say, “Everything is okay, and you just need a little more across the board.” It's simply not the truth. The hospitals in Peel region, the hospitals in all of the area surrounding the GTA, the 905, are struggling to deal with population numbers that in no way compare to what they were when the hospitals, the children's aid societies, the school boards—it's the entire list of what is provided in terms of programs in the growth areas.

We have been trying to explain to the provincial government that you cannot just do a base funding across the board and say that that is a reasonable approach. If there are parts of the province that are growing at an exponential rate, you must review what services are being provided and ultimately fund them accordingly. It is a huge problem for us in Peel, in Caledon. I know that my colleague from York–Simcoe deals with it on a regular basis. Every time we have these across-the-board increases, it simply puts our agencies, our hospitals and our school boards at another disadvantage, because we're trying to deal with population increases that the dollars that are being suggested simply cannot keep up with.

The other interesting thing I found about Tuesday's budget—I'm relatively new; I've only been a member since 2007, so I've only had three or four budgets to review. Some people called it an election budget. I think there was a lot of blaming going on in this document. I heard a lot of comments saying, “If we weren't here, someone else would do it poorly. Someone else would destroy the province.”

There was a lot of finger pointing at the federal government. There are just a few here that I wanted to highlight. The budget has an entire section called “Ontario Needs a Strong Federal Partner.” In it, the Liberals call for changes to the EI program; call for more support for skills training programs; attack the federal government for cutting funding to settlement agencies; call for long-term federal commitments to infrastructure, innovation and financial regulations; and call on the federal government—this is the one that I find fascinating—to assume responsibility for inmates serving sentences of over six months. Where does that come from? Ontario has always been responsible for incarceration of a year less a day—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Two years less a day.

1740

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —two years less a day. Thank you very much. We have had that model for as long as I can recall, and suddenly, when you're looking for more money, you point at the federal government and say, “Well, come and solve it for us”? It seems completely against the grain that you would have a financial problem and you'd point to the federal government and say,

“Solve it.” We’re supposed to be a stand-alone government that can actually solve problems, that can make decisions. Some of them are tough decisions, I will grant you that, but, ultimately, to decide in a budget document that you’re going to get into a fighting match over, “We’re going to go from two years less a day to six months, and we think it’s a good idea here in Ontario, so feds, step up to the post”? I don’t understand it. We have responsibilities in the justice and criminal issues side that we need to accept.

Maybe this shot calling for the federal government to assume responsibility for inmates serving sentences of over six months was, in fact, a pre-emptive strike, and that’s how they’re going to be able to close the three jails, one of them being in Sarnia. I don’t know. I think it’s probably a tad presumptuous to assume that, whoever ends up being in power, the feds will ultimately make that decision because it ended up in an Ontario budget during—oh, that’s right. It’s a federal campaign happening right now. I’m sure—and I’m trying to be kind—that there is nothing to do, with those many points to the federal government, with the fact that we are currently in the midst of a federal election.

It’s interesting because, of course, I was in Stratford listening to the Premier explain that he has no intention of getting involved in the federal election. This was the Friday before the writ was dropped: no intention of getting involved in the federal election. I think his exact words were, “I have enough to do to keep Ontario moving forward”—and then to see, not even four days later in the budget, seven items that they are specifically calling for federal action on. Today, of course, he was making another announcement that had nothing to do with the Ontario government or the Ontario budget, but in fact was wading into the federal debate.

It’s fascinating to me that we have a Premier who says, “I’m not going to get engaged,” and yet in his budget has very clearly decided to throw down the gauntlet in terms of, “These are the proposals and ideas that I would like the federal government to move forward to.” Maybe he reads the polls more closely than we realize and is trying to help someone; hard to say.

Just to recap, I want to go back to the beginning of our comments, and that was, we’re dealing with some very serious financial issues here. We are already dealing with a government that has increased public spending by 70%, and yet in the private sector we’ve seen an increase of 9%. It comes down to an unsustainable model. We cannot continue to increase spending by 70% and expect that a 9% increase in the private sector is going to in any way be able to close that gap.

I worry. I’m concerned about what that means down the road to our children, our grandchildren. I wish we would spend more of our time talking about how we’re going to deal with those deficit numbers and how we’re actually going to have a plan, moving forward, that will ensure future generations of Ontario residents aren’t paying for the new, exciting and, quite frankly in some cases, frivolous ideas that have been coming forward

from this Liberal government in the last seven years. I will leave it at that.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to thank the member from Dufferin–Caledon. She made some good points. However, I touched on a lot of things earlier that weren’t in the budget, like poverty, pensions, jobs, HST relief, the environment, the supposed 600,000 jobs that have now dropped to 500,000 and dropping every year in their predictions, and the 50,000 green venture jobs that aren’t going to happen.

I’d like to touch on some of the other things I’m concerned about. Half of the forest sustainability funds sit in a Toronto bank account. There’s no mention of getting it out to the Ontario businesses that desperately need it.

On the Ring of Fire: It is a no-brainer that the First Nations need to be at the table in any discussions about the Ring of Fire. Every Ring of Fire project needs to bring jobs and resource wealth to the First Nations who live on and from the land.

On the botched energy file: The budget re-commits to 50% of nuclear capacity and has no changes other than to offer some specifics about loan guarantees provided to First Nations for green energy projects. The HST is still applied to home heating and electricity. No change in time-of-use pricing or anything to do with smart meters. It is still a mystery why this government hasn’t moved to rely far less on nuclear, especially in the face of recent catastrophes. There are real problems with the \$1.5-billion smart meter program. There needs to be a fundamental rethink of the entire program, especially the severely flawed time-of-use pricing scheme.

On the environment file, the budget continues to fail Ontarians. There is no support to make environmental action affordable to Ontarians, nothing to stop rising transit fares or help Ontarians reduce their energy use, and no announcement of a replacement of the cancelled home retrofit program. Rising energy rates will hurt Ontarians unless the government makes conservation, energy efficiency and environmental solutions affordable. The government is not yet on track to meet its 2014-20 climate change emission reduction targets also, and there are no measures in this budget to change that at all.

There is so much missing in this budget, I could go on all day.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I’m just going to comment briefly on the comments made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

I guess the first question that comes to mind is, where is the Conservative plan? What would they have done if they were in power? Nobody is mentioning a key fact: This budget was put forward, and it’s a budget of growth and continuing to stay on course, whereas the recent economic global recession affected every country in the world. We didn’t shrink back or react with a knee-jerk

reaction. We didn't attack our health care system. We didn't attack our education system. We stayed the course. They were vulnerable and could have easily been the first victim or first casualty of this budget, but they weren't. We continued going forward. We made a decision to protect health care and education.

I just want to know what the Conservatives would have done. Would they have sold off assets? We didn't sell off major assets. They sold off the 407. We didn't sell off our major assets.

We continue to educate our workforce and continue to have a public health care system that strengthens Ontario and attracts new business. That's an important thing to do.

We did inherit a deficit. It has been acknowledged in many other circles outside of this one that there was a deficit. I just don't know what the Conservatives would have done.

We had GM and Chrysler on the verge of closing. We invested in them, and now they're back on their feet again. We invested in full-day kindergarten. Would they have done that? Would they reduce the size of Ontario's public sector? We did that, but it's through an attrition process rather than slash and burn. These are some questions that remain unanswered, and I'm happy to comment today.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I just want to compliment the member for Dufferin–Caledon on her presentation this afternoon, which brings us almost to 6 o'clock. I thought her speech was outstanding, and she indicated during the course of her remarks that she has only been here for four years. I thought her remarks conveyed a breadth of knowledge and experience that is extremely impressive and is amongst the best in our caucus. She deserves enormous credit for the work she's done over the last four years, working on behalf of the people of Dufferin–Caledon. I have certainly benefited from the relationship that I've had working with her, because she's one of my neighbours. We've worked on many issues together. I certainly look forward to her service in the Legislature for many, many years to come.

1750

She and the member for Whitby–Oshawa worked together on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Certainly, the work they did in that respect, I think, provided the kind of leadership across party lines, reaching across the partisan divide, to ensure that the committee functioned in a way that was unprecedented in the time that I've been in the Legislature, as I observed it. There was great work done by members of all parties, but certainly the leadership was provided by the member for Dufferin–Caledon and the member for Whitby–Oshawa, to show that by working together on an important issue that for many years had not received the attention that it was due, there would be an effort made to bring forward constructive recommendations through the committee process and bring them forward into the Legislature. To

the extent that the government has responded, I think the credit is due to the member for Dufferin–Caledon and the member for Whitby–Oshawa. I would say that the other members on the committee deserve some measure of credit, but certainly the leadership came from this side of the House on that issue, and I think all members understand that.

Once again, congratulations to the member for Dufferin–Caledon for the remarks this afternoon and the outstanding work that she's done on behalf of her constituents for the last three and a half years.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a couple of minutes as well to respond with some comments to the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

I certainly want to congratulate the minister and his parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, who is here this afternoon in her role, watching and participating in the debate, for the fine work they both did in bringing to this place a budget that responds to the needs of the day.

I want to go to the member who presented for the 20 minutes and agree with her when she opened and said that there were important elements in this budget, which she was pleased to see, in the introduction of a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy and introducing as such. She made the comment that she would hope there would be more flesh on the bone. I can't help but agree with her, and that's why the Minister of Health, just in the past week or so, indicated that a more comprehensive plan would come forward during the spring of this year. I think we're all anxious to see that happen. I think it's going to be an important, fundamental part of this budget and an important, fundamental part of where we go with children and youth in mental health.

The budget commits to some \$93 million; the funding will grow to \$93 million by 2013-14. That's not far away when one ramps up a strategy in this regard, making sure the money is spent as effectively as possible. So I'm pleased to hear the member speak positively about that element of the budget and pleased to extend my support for that as well.

I'm pleased with other elements of the budget. I could probably use more than the 30 seconds I have left, but I do want to mention the matter of post-secondary spaces. In the minister's speech, he said, "No keen and qualified Ontario student will be turned away for lack of space on our part or lack of money on his or her part." That's a fundamental tenet of post-secondary education as we build towards the next economy and provide opportunities for young people: No keen or interested student will be turned away by lack of money on his or her part, as the case might be.

I'm pleased with a number of elements in this budget, not the least of which are those two.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the comments from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Scarborough Southwest, Wellington–Halton Hills—that was very kind, Ted—and Pickering–Scarborough East.

I am happy that there are some comments and that we're all collectively talking about how to improve services in mental health and addictions. I'm pleased that the opposition day motion was accepted and we are going to see a specific plan coming forward in the spring. I hope that plan will have a lot more detail. Two lines in the budget really doesn't give me enough to say "You're on the right track" or "We need to move further."

I will say that that select committee was a very positive experience. And for what it's worth, as a newbie, I think we should be doing a lot more select committees on specific issues. We don't all have the answers. I don't presume to know how we can wrestle that debt and that deficit down. I do know that we have to deal with it. It is simply unfair to keep putting it off to future generations.

I keep my children's photo on my desk, and part of it is because I'm not there to see them every day; part of it is because I want to be reminded that this job that we are all doing is not about us individually; it's about the constituents and the people we are trying to make Ontario better for. The select committee process for me was a very positive one. We did have some very positive discussions that happened on a three-party level. Quite frankly, with some of these issues that just don't have an easy answer, it's a great opportunity to use that collective brain power that we all have and that I'm sure we all wanted to bring here when we were elected.

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

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the budget. The 2011 budget is one of the best, I was told by my constituents.

It will protect the health record that since 2003 we've been able to create, and it will protect the education that since 2003 we were able to create. We know the health sector and also the education sector are really the two most important pieces of our record. We are able to make a stark comparison with the previous government. As you know, before we came to power in 2003, 10,000 nurses were fired by the PC government. I remember a total of 20 hospitals were closed. During the last seven or eight years, we were able to build 18 new hospitals, or additions.

Talking about education, of course, we have full-day kindergarten, which is another tremendous piece on the record of our government. In this 2011 budget we are going to create 60,000 spaces in higher education, and this is very important. As we are moving from the manufacturing economy to the knowledge economy, we need Ontarians—we need their talent, their skill. So with this addition of 60,000 spaces, we are going to be able to compete.

It's no longer like Ontarians compete with Ontarians. We have to compete with the world. We have to compete with countries like India, China, Middle Eastern countries or Brazil, so we need those talents; we need those skills. These 60,000 additional spaces certainly will help that.

There are other worthier, good measures in our 2011 budget. Look at this encouragement of the private sector in partnership with the public sector. We are going to invest \$1.3 billion total in this partnership. Our government is intending to fund \$175 million to get this partnership together.

So you can see this is a budget, this is—you've got something for me?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, you've got to read that, Mr. Chan: "I'm sharing my time with the member from Northumberland–Quinte West."

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm sharing my time with Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Good stuff. Keep going.

Hon. Michael Chan: Oh, I should keep going. All right.

Interjection: Lou's not here.

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

Hon. Michael Chan: That's fine.

So you can see the importance. This is a budget to protect our health. This is a budget to protect our education. Also, this is a budget that will enhance and strengthen our economy. As we are turning the corner, we must move ahead, and with this budget I think we are going to move ahead.

This morning, I had the opportunity, together with my colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek and my other colleague, in my neighbouring riding, Dr. Reza Moridi, and also the MPP from—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Greg Sorbara was there too.

Hon. Michael Chan: Greg Sorbara, yes. He was there. We had this presentation up in Vaughan. It was a fantastic breakfast, a get-together to discuss this 2011 budget. We had a number of panels there. We really entered into a deep discussion of health, education, the child and youth mental situation, and investment in the budget. We are really proud of this budget.

People say that it's an election budget, but it's not really the typical election budget because we are not looking for something small here and there and there like the previous government or like the federal government. We are moving forward, and this is exactly what we intend to do.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It now being 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldeep (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Clerks / Greffiers: Valerie Quioc Lim, Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Helena Jaczek
Norm Miller, Leeanna Pendergast
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Jim Brownell, Steve Clark
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Steve Clark
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX
Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité
spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le
London Stock Exchange Group**

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
Peter Shurman, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 176, Mme Gelinas / Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée, projet de loi 176, Mme Gelinas	
First reading agreed to.....	5060
Mme France Gélinas	5061
Public Sector Salary Disclosure Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 177, Ms. Horwath / Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public, projet de loi 177, Mme Horwath	
First reading agreed to.....	5061
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5061

MOTIONS

Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	5061
Motion agreed to	5061

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Daffodil Month / Mois de la jonquille	
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5061
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5062
Mme France Gélinas	5062

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Highway safety	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5063
Office of the Ombudsman	
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5063
Child custody	
Mr. Bob Delaney	5064
Oak Ridges moraine	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5064
Diagnostic services	
Mme France Gélinas	5064
Domestic violence	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5064

Protection for people with disabilities	
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	5065
Services en français	
Mme France Gélinas	5065
Paramedics	
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	5065
Office of the Ombudsman	
Mme France Gélinas	5065
Multiple sclerosis treatment	
Mr. Bob Delaney	5065
Taxation	
Mme France Gélinas	5066
Oak Ridges moraine	
Mr. John O'Toole	5066
Child custody	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5066
Oak Ridges moraine	
Mr. John O'Toole	5066

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

2011 Ontario budget	
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	5066
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5069
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5069
Mr. Bob Delaney	5070
Mr. John O'Toole	5070
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	5070
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5071
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5073
Mr. Bob Delaney	5073
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5073
Mr. Rick Johnson	5074
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5074
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5074
Mr. Mario Sergio.....	5077
Mr. John O'Toole	5077
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	5077
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	5077
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5078
Mr. Bob Delaney	5078
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5079
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	5081
Mr. Paul Miller.....	5081
Mr. Mario Sergio.....	5081
Mr. Ted Arnott	5082
Mr. Bob Delaney	5082
Mr. John O'Toole	5082
Mr. Paul Miller.....	5085
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5086

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5086
Mr. Bob Delaney	5086
Mr. John O'Toole	5086
Mr. Paul Miller	5087
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5090
Mr. John O'Toole	5090
Mme France Gélinas.....	5090
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	5091
Mr. Paul Miller	5091
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	5091
Mr. Jeff Leal	5093
Mrs. Christine Elliott	5094
Mme France Gélinas.....	5095
Mr. Reza Moridi	5095
Mr. Bob Delaney	5095
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	5095
Ms. Sylvia Jones	5096
Mr. Paul Miller	5098
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5098
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	5099
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	5099
Ms. Sylvia Jones	5100
Hon. Michael Chan.....	5100
Debate deemed adjourned.....	5100

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 4 April 2011 / Lundi 4 avril 2011

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. James J. Bradley	5047
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5047
Hon. John Wilkinson	5047
Mr. Jeff Leal	5047
Mr. Phil McNeely	5047
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5047
Mr. Dave Levac	5047

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario budget

Mr. Tim Hudak	5047
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5047

Ontario budget

Mr. Tim Hudak	5048
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5048

Executive compensation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5049
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5049

Executive compensation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5050
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5050

Home care

Mrs. Christine Elliott	5051
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5051

Energy conservation

Mr. Peter Tabuns	5051
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5051

Renewable energy

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	5052
Hon. John Wilkinson	5052

Government spending

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5052
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5052

Ontario artists

Mr. Peter Tabuns	5053
Hon. Charles Sousa	5053

Water quality

Mr. Rick Johnson	5053
Hon. John Wilkinson	5053

Renewable energy

Mr. Robert Bailey	5054
Hon. John Wilkinson	5054

Retirement homes

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5055
Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis	5055

Health care

Mr. Wayne Arthurs	5055
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5055

Environmental protection

Mr. John O'Toole	5056
Hon. John Wilkinson	5056

Child protection

Mr. Rosario Marchese	5056
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	5057

Research and innovation

Mrs. Liz Sandals	5057
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5057

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	5058
---------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ted McMeekin	5058
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5058

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Brent Poland

Mr. Robert Bailey	5058
-------------------------	------

Lorraine Baddeley

Mr. Bob Delaney	5058
-----------------------	------

Autism treatment

Ms. Sylvia Jones	5058
------------------------	------

Youth exchanges

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5059
-----------------------	------

Energy policies

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	5059
-------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mme France Gélinas	5059
--------------------------	------

Diabetes

Mr. Ted McMeekin	5060
------------------------	------

Ontario economy

Ms. Helena Jaczek	5060
-------------------------	------

Education funding

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5060
------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover